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# THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

OR

Anecdotes, Similes, Emblems, Illustrations;  
Expository, Scientific, Geographical, His-  
torical, and Homiletic, Gathered from  
a Wide Range of Home and Foreign  
Literature, on the Verses of the Bible

BY

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*THE PSALMS. Vol. I.*



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PSALMS.

**TITLES.**—*Book of Praise*:—1. The Hebrew title is “Tehillim” (plural of “Tehillah,” praise or hymn), Praises or Songs of Praise; or “Sepher Tehillim,” Book of Praise, expressive of the character and object of the book, namely, “to declare the Glory of God.” 2. The title given in New Testament (Luke xx. 42; Acts i. 20) is “Book of Psalms,” and in all Christian versions it is the same, or collectively “The Psalter,” a name derived from a musical stringed instrument (1 Kings x. 12) made of wood, in the style of a harp and in shape like a Greek delta. (*E. J. Boyce.*) *Prayers*:—Another name, given not to the whole Psalter, but to a portion of it, is “Tephilloth,” Prayers. At the end of Psalm lxxii. there is appended a notice, which applies probably to the whole collection up to that point, “The Prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended”; and in the later Books a few other Psalms (lxxxvi., xc., cii., cxlii.) are entitled “Prayers.” The title is justified by the contents of most of the Psalms. Psalms, it is true, like i., ii., xxxiii., xxxvii., contain no address to God; and many others, which contain petitions and supplications, are not throughout in the form of prayers. And yet, if prayer be the eye of the heart turned towards God, then each Psalm is a prayer. Thus the very names of the Psalms, “Praises and Prayers,” not only tell us what they are, but remind us “in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make known our requests unto God.” (*Bishop Perowne.*)

**DIVISIONS.**—We are accustomed to speak as if the Psalter were a single book; but, accurately, it is five books drawn up at different times and placed side by side. In Revised Version this division is rightly maintained, and even in Authorised Version it may be traced by means of the doxology with which each book closes. Book I. comprises Psalms i.-xli.; Book II., xlii.-lxxii.; Book III., lxxiii.-lxxxix.; Book IV., xc.-cvi.; Book V., cvii.-cl. There is some reason to believe, however, that originally the books were three, and that they were altered into five in imitation of the Pentateuch; the original divisions being—(1) i.-xli., (2) xlii.-lxxxix., (3) xc.-cl. There can be no doubt that these books were compiled in the order in which they come down to us; yet we are not to imagine that all the early Psalms were comprised in the first book, and none but late Psalms in the fifth. An analogy with “Hymns Ancient and Modern” may help us here. A few years ago an appendix was issued, and this contains many hymns written since the first edition was published; but also it goes over exactly the same ground as the original edition, and contains a sprinkling of ancient hymns. It is tolerably certain that originally the compilations were distinct, and that the various editors worked quite independently. This is shown by the remarkable fact that the same Psalms, with slight variations, occur more than once, just as nowadays we may find the same hymn, with or without a slight change, in, say, “Hymns Ancient and Modern” and “The Hymnal Companion.” Thus Psalm liii. in Book II. is the same as Psalm xiv. in Book I., and Psalm lxx. the same as vers. 13-17 of Psalm xl. And in Book V. Psalm cviii. consists of five verses of Psalm lvii., added to six verses of Psalm lx., these verses, of course, belonging to Book II. Clearly, if the compilers of the later books were endeavouring merely to supplement the earlier they would never have incorporated into their collections Psalms which they knew had already appeared.

Another proof of the independence of the various compilations is found in the fact of the varying use of the two names of God—Jehovah and Elohim. It would appear that there were periods when one name was customarily in use, and periods when opinion favoured the other name. Thus in Book I. Jehovah occurs nearly twenty times as often as Elohim; in Book II. Elohim five times as often as Jehovah; in Books IV. and V. the name Jehovah alone occurs. And the curious thing is, that if the Elohim editor incorporated any Psalm or part of a Psalm from a book which prefers to speak of God as Jehovah, he deliberately changes the name to Elohim. These facts help us to see clearly what the history of the Psalms has been. The several books were plainly quite independent collections of praise-songs, made at different periods, and based upon a still larger number of compilations. About 150 B.C. an editor placed the five books side by side, and perhaps added Psalm cl. as a kind of final doxology. (*A. M. Mackay, B.A.*)

**AGE AND AUTHORSHIP.**—A large proportion of the Psalms are connected, in the titles prefixed, with the names of various individuals, namely, Moses (1), David (73), Solomon (2), the sons of Korah (11, including one to which the name of Heman is also attached), Asaph (12), and Ethan (1); whilst of the Psalms bearing the name of David, some are associated with particular incidents in his lifetime. But the contents of many of these last are inconsistent with the statements in the titles. In v. 7, xxvii. 4, and lxxv. 4 the allusion to a *temple* does not suit David's reign. In li., which in the title is brought into relation with David's intrigue with Bathsheba, the writer is conscious (ver. 4) of sin against God only (not man), and the closing verses are a prayer for the building of the walls of Jerusalem. Psalm xxxiv., assigned to the time when David feigned madness at the court of Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 13), is avowedly intended to give instruction "in the fear of Jehovah." In lix., which the title connects with Saul's attempt to kill David at his own house (1 Sam. xix. 11), the prayer to God to arise and visit the nations (vers. 5, 8) is inappropriate to the supposed situation. In these cases the value of the titles is discredited, and doubt, in consequence, is cast upon others which are not so obviously in error. The internal evidence, however, though sufficing to disprove many of the conclusions expressed in the titles, is for the most part too vague to supply others as precise but more correct. Nevertheless, there is great probability that some Psalms proceed from David, though much uncertainty as to which they are,—xviii. and xxiv. perhaps having as good a claim as any to be considered his. Others, by their allusions to the king, may have been composed at any time within the period of the monarchy (ii., xx., xxi., xlv., lxi., lxiii., lxxii.); and to these should be added xlvii.—xlviii., lxxv., lxxvi., the language of which, though more or less suitable to any occasion when the nation had experienced a great deliverance, is peculiarly appropriate to the time of Sennacherib's overthrow in the reign of Hezekiah. Many are fixed, by their allusions to the captive and distressed condition of the people and the desolation of the temple, to the Exile, or to some later calamity like the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes (168 B.C.), which roused the resistance of the Maccabees (lxxiv., lxxix., lxxx., lxxxix.). Psalm cxxvi. expresses the outburst of joy excited by the return from captivity; whilst lxxxv. seems to reflect the despondency which afterwards supervened. A certain number of Psalms are liturgical in character (cxv., cxxxv.), and these must proceed from times when the temple services were carefully organised. It is not, however, improbable that many which exhibit traces of late origin contain an earlier nucleus, old material having been adapted to subsequent needs. The alterations and combinations to which writings of this kind were liable is clearly evidenced by a comparison of cviii. with lvii. and lx., and of lxx. with xl. (*G. W. Wade, D.D.*) Are there any Davidic Psalms? I can only say frankly that I am unable to answer *Yes*, and am not, with my present light, willing to say *No*. My reluctance is not due to hesitation to accept the demonstrated results of criticism, but to my uncertainty whether there may not be Davidic Psalms, or fragments, in the collection which later ages looked upon as so surely a production of the Bethlehemite king. 1. The earliest germane testimony is in Amos vi. 5, which shows that David was famed as an inventor of musical instruments; but it is secular music which is referred to, and the devising of these instruments is mentioned as a reproach. 2. Ancient testimony shows that David was a skilled player, but says nothing about his singing or composing (1 Sam. xvi. 18). 3. Nevertheless, David was a poet (2 Sam. i. 19–27, iii. 33, 34). 4. But the Davidic poetry in Samuel is altogether unlike the poetry in the Psalms. The lament over Saul and Jonathan offered a fine opportunity for the expression of



religious emotion, but the poem expresses only human feelings. The assured Davidic poetry corresponds to his musical instruments in its secular character. This is the more remarkable because David was intensely religious. 5. True, David is called in 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, "The sweet Psalmist of Israel"; but the passage is obscure in the original. 6. It is difficult, with any degree of confidence, to assign individual Psalms to David; for the internal evidence rarely agrees with his date or his life. Ewald assigned about a dozen Psalms, or parts of Psalms, to David; but since his day the tendency of critical opinion has steadily been growing less favourable to the theory of Davidic authorship. (*L. W. Batten, Ph.D.*) None of the extant Psalms are the genuine work of David, who was doubtless a gifted musician and poet, but whose hymns were probably too little in accordance with later ideas of art and of religion to escape the great literary as well as political catastrophe of the Exile. Contrast the life of David in the Books of Samuel with the character sketched, evidently from life, in the so-called Davidic Psalms. Granting that David lived in the service of an ideal which he sought, but often failed, to realise, could that ideal have agreed with the picture presented to us in the Psalter? How much is there in the tone or the ideas or the implied circumstances of the Psalms which agrees with the tone or ideas of the traditional speeches of David and with his traditional history? Enough, perhaps, to permit us to regard him as a far-off adumbration of the nobler members of the post-exilic Church, and therefore also of Him who was the "root and offspring of David" (Rev. xxii. 16), but scarcely more than this. David was, in fact, the traditional founder of psalmody, and to some extent a precursor of the religion of the Psalter. Perhaps, too, Psalms which David really wrote may have been expanded by later writers. (*T. K. Cheyne, D.D.*) In my judgment the evidence of tradition forces us to assign to David an important part in the development not merely of secular, but also of religious lyric poetry, between which the line that we now draw did not exist in the earlier times. On the other hand, I think it not improbable that Davidic Psalms have been so edited, adapted, added to, and subtracted from in the course of the centuries that it is doubtful whether we can hope ever certainly to identify his handiwork. (*J. P. Peters, D.D.*) That some of the Psalms are of a composite character is certain, and this would, in any case, make it more difficult to detect the authors. Even in "Hymns Ancient and Modern," if we look at the list of writers, we find some hymns due to several hands. Thus "Oft in danger" is by Henry Kirk White, F. F. Maitland, and others; "Brightly gleams our Banner" was written by J. T. Potter, and altered by an unknown hand; several hymns have been changed or added to by the compilers, and so forth. We find the same peculiarities in the Psalter. In some cases new Psalms have been composed by taking verses of two previous compositions and piecing them together. Psalm cviii., e.g., is made out of verses from lvii. and lx. Just as in the Rome of to-day comparatively modern buildings contain stones which may have formed part successively of the Rome of the ancient Republic, the Rome of the Christian emperors, and the Rome of the mediæval popes, even so verses in the Psalms have been embedded in successive strata of Psalmody. Thus Psalm cxliv. is a perfect mosaic. The first eleven verses contain the following quotations: Psalm xviii. 1, 2, 34, 47, viii. 4, xviii. 9, 14, 15, 16, 50, xxxix. 5, 6, xii. 2, xxxiii. 2, 3; in fact, there is hardly a word that is not borrowed; then follow four verses which form in reality a quite distinct poem, and can hardly be made to blend with what precedes them by any legerdemain,—indeed, Bishop Perowne abandons the attempt, and prints these verses separately. If we consider these facts we see how hopeless must be the endeavour to discover the names of authors. And it is just as well that the Psalms should be disconnected from names and circumstances, for thus we learn that their teaching is of universal application, and that they express the aspirations and emotions not of this man and that man, but of all humanity. (*A. M. Mackay, B.A.*)

**HISTORICAL INSCRIPTIONS.**—These are especially frequent in the first half of the collection designated "Prayers of David" (li.-lxxiii.). An examination of these headings will show that they were taken from the historical books, and that the Psalms bear on the whole no relation to the events referred to. Apparently the title "Prayers of David" suggested to some Jewish scholar, who understood the title literally, to connect them with David's history as related in the books of Samuel. He did not go all through the "Prayers of David" in this manner, but only through the first half (li.-lxxiii.). Afterwards his unfinished work found admirers, and his proposed identifications were placed at the heads of the Psalms he had

annotated. In the first Book of Psalms, the Psalter of David, there are also three Psalms (iii., vii., xviii.) with historical headings. Psalm xviii. appears again in the Book of Samuel, and its position there explains its title. Given the belief that David wrote Psalm iii., the reason of the present heading is apparent. Whence the heading of Psalm vii. is derived, or what is the event or individual referred to, has not yet been made out. There are, further, one or two Psalms near the close of the whole collection (cxxxix., cxl., cxlii.) which have liturgical directions like those in the first part of the Psalter. These belong to a small collection of late date, entitled "Psalms of David," consisting of Psalms cxxxviii.-cxlv., which appear to have been modelled after and to have borrowed their headings, already unintelligible, from the "Psalms of David" in the older Psalter. (*J. P. Peters, D.D.*) The inscriptions of the Psalms are like the subscriptions to the New Testament Epistles. They are not of any necessary authority, and their value must be weighed and tested by the usual critical processes. (*Bishop Perowne.*)

**MUSICAL INSCRIPTIONS.**—We can all recollect the hymn-books which had immediately after the number the name of the tune to which it should be sung. The same custom prevailed among the ancient Jews, and this is the explanation of some of the inscriptions which once puzzled commentators. Thus Psalm xxii. is to be sung to tune "The Hind of the Dawn"; Psalm lvi. to "The Silent Dove in Far-off Lands"; Psalms lvii., lix., and lxxv. to "Destroy Not"; Psalm ix. to "The Death of the Son"; and so forth. Comment has sometimes been made on the strangeness of those titles, but the New Zealander of 3000 A.D. may be just as puzzled on looking over the tunes which head the words in some of our hymn-books, e.g., "Golden Sheaves," "Old Martyrs," "Showers of Blessing," and "St. Joseph of the Studium." In some hymn-books the contents are distinguished as hymns, psalms, paraphrases, or anthems. The Jews similarly discriminated. The inscription translated "A Song" meant a Psalm to be sung with instrumental accompaniment; "Shiggaion," an irregular ode; "A Song of Ascents," probably a Psalm to be sung whilst going up to the yearly feasts at Jerusalem, and so forth. In some of our hymns we have verses to be sung by trebles only, others by men only: "Aleloth" (after the manner of a maiden) probably means soprano alone, and "Sheminith" (upon the octave below), men alone. Apparently there were no elaborate marks of expression such as we use; the oft-recurring "Selah" probably meant that either voices or instruments, or both, were to be raised, and if so it was equivalent to our forte. (*A. M. Mackay, B.A.*) "Neginoth" apparently means "with string music." "Mizmor" also may indicate an accompaniment of stringed instruments, while "Nehiloth" appears to mean "with wind instruments." (*J. P. Peters, D.D.*) "To the Chief Musician" means, probably, "For the Leader of the Choir," and indicates that the original copy of the Psalm thus inserted in the book was one that had belonged to the chorister in the old temple. "Muthlabben" means "arranged for training the soprano voices." Professor Murray supposes that this particular Psalm was used for rehearsal by the women singers. (*W. Gladden, D.D.*)

**THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS.**—The poetry of the Psalms is "a poetry of friendship between the spirit of man and the spirit of God"; a poetry apparently ordained to leaven the poetry of the whole world, as the history of the Old Testament to be the "sun of all other histories." (*John Keble.*) Psalm after Psalm is a monologue of the soul with God, or a dialogue between it and God. There is a distinction between meditation, however devout, and real prayer. In meditation God is present, but, so to speak, in the third person only. In prayer God is present, but present in the second person, the personal "Thou" corresponding to the personal "I." Bishop Ken's line, "And thought to thought with Thee converse," is the very expression of the spirit of the Psalms. Yet they are filled with a joy which is at once solemn and childlike. In spite of all their sighs and tears, for all their tender sympathy with the Passion of Christ and the sorrows of His people, "the power of light lives inexhaustibly" in them. One only (lxxxviii.) begins and ends with a sob. In all the rest joy sparkles, if not on the crest of every wave, yet along the line of every tide. (*Archbishop Alexander.*) We may feel the pulses of our Psalmists' passions beating in their ditties if we would lay our hearts unto them. As ethnic poets' passions, expressed in their writings, bewray their experience in such matters as they write of,—as of their delight in love enjoyed, or of earthly sorrow for their exile, death of friends, or other like worldly crosses,—so do these sacred ditties

witness their penmen's experience in such matters as they profess—as of spiritual joy, comfort, fear, confidence, or any other affection. (*Dean Jackson.*)

**HISTORICAL REFERENCES.**—How great is the history of the Psalms! David sang them, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and all the Prophets. With Psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned from Babylon. Psalms gave courage and strength to the Macabees in their brave struggles to achieve their country's independence, and were the repeated expression of their thanksgivings. The Lord of Psalmists, and the Son of David, by the words of a Psalm, proved Himself to be higher than David; and sang Psalms with His Apostles on the night before He suffered, when He instituted the Holy Supper of His love. In His last awful hour on the Cross He expressed, in the words of one Psalm, "His fear and His need of God," and in the words of another, gave up His spirit to His Father. With Psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight, when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And after his own example, the Apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colossæ to teach and admonish one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Jerome tells us that in his day the Psalms were to be heard in the fields and the vineyards of Palestine, and that they fell sweetly on the ear, mingling with the songs of birds and the scent of flowers in the spring. The ploughman as he guided his plough chanted the Hallelujah, and the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. "These," he says, "are our love songs, these the instruments of our agriculture." Sidonius Apollinaris makes his boatmen, as they urge their heavily laden barge up stream, sing Psalms, till the river-banks echo again with the Hallelujah, and beautifully applies the custom, in a figure, to the voyage of the Christian life. With the verse of a Psalm, "Turn again, then, unto thy rest, O my soul," the pious Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, comforted himself while awaiting his martyrdom in the Decian persecution, saying, "From this we learn that our soul comes to rest when it is removed by death from this restless world." Paulla, the friend of Jerome, was seen by those who were gathered around her in her last hour to move her lips, and when they stooped to listen they heard the words, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts." A Psalm (iv.) was the best utterance for the overflowing joy of Augustine's heart at his conversion, and a Psalm (xxxii.) was his consolation when he lay upon his deathbed. With the words of Psalms, Chrysostom comforted himself in his exile, writing thus, "When driven from the city, I cared nothing for it. But I said to myself, If the empress wishes to banish me, let her banish me; 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.'" And again, "David clothes me with armour, saying, 'I will speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed.'" With the words of a Psalm, holy Bernard expired. With the words of a Psalm, Huss and Jerome of Prague gave up their souls, without fear, to God, in the midst of the fire. Chanting the twelfth verse of the 118th Psalm with voices that rose high above the din of battle, the Protestant army rushed to victory at Courtras. With the voice of a Psalm, Luther entered Worms, singing brave defiance to pope and cardinals, and all the gates of hell. With Psalms, that faithful servant of God, Adolphe Monod, strengthened himself to endure the agonies of a lingering and painful disease. In the biography of Bishop Blomfield no page possesses a deeper interest, a truer pathos, than that which records that for many years before his death the 51st Psalm had been his nightly prayer. What shall I say more? The history of the Psalms is the history of the Church, and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. It is a history not fully revealed in this world, but one which is written in heaven. It is a history which, could we know it, might teach us to hush many an angry thought, to recall many a bitter, hasty, uncharitable speech. The pages of that book have often been blotted with the tears of those whom others deemed hard and cold, and whom they treated with suspicion or contempt. Those words have gone up to God, mingled with the sighs or scarcely uttered in the heart-broken anguish of those whom pharisees called sinners, of those whom Christians denounced as heretics or infidels, but who loved God and truth above all things else. Surely it is holy ground. We cannot pray the Psalms without realising in a very special manner the communion of saints, the oneness of the Church militant and the Church triumphant. We cannot pray the Psalms without having our hearts opened, our affections enlarged, our thoughts drawn heavenward. He who can pray them best is nearest to God, knows most of the Spirit of Christ, is ripest for heaven. (*Bishop Perowne.*)





# THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

## THE PSALMS.

### PSALM I.

**VER. 1-6. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.**

—*The 1st Psalm, introductory*:—This Psalm seems to have been placed first in the collection because, from its general character and subject, it formed a suitable introduction to the rest. It treats of the blessedness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked, topics which constantly recur in the Psalms, but it treats of them as if all experience pointed only in one direction. The moral problem which, in other Psalms, troubles the ancient poets of Israel, when they see the evil prospering and the good oppressed, has here no place. The poet rests calmly in the truth that it is well with the righteous. He is not vexed with those passionate questionings of heart which meet us in such Psalms as the 37th and 73rd. Hence we may probably conclude that his lot was cast in happier and more peaceful times. The close of the Psalm is, however, as Ewald remarks, truly prophetic, perpetually in force, and consequently descriptive of what is to be expected at all times in the course of the world's history. In style the Psalm is simple and clear. In form it is little more than the expansion of a proverb. (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*)

*The felicity of the godly man, and infelicity of the wicked*:—Ver. 1. Teacheth a godly man 1. To beware of the ungodly man's persuasions; 2. Of their order of life; and 3. Of their society and company keeping. Ver. 2. Teacheth him by the contrary what he must do. 1. Take delight and pleasure in God's Word; because we do hardly profit by those things which we take no pleasure in; 2. Use all the means whereby we may be builded up in knowledge; for so generally do I take these words, "meditate day and night." Ver. 3. A promise annexed for our better encouragement, which expresseth God's wonderful goodness, and our dulness and heaviness, that have need of such spurs. By which also we may see the right use of God's promises, namely, to provoke us to all well-doings (1 Cor. vii. 1). Ver. 4. Doth not only contain judgments against the wicked, but also teacheth, yea, spur-reth forward the godly, by beholding their punishments, to more heedily walking; and whereas the Holy Ghost resembleth the wicked to chaff tossed before the wind, it teaches us, that though the wicked think themselves glorious, and of long continuance, yet they are neither the one nor the other. Ver. 5. Teacheth that God, with His fan, will make a separation between the good corn and the chaff (Matt. iii. 12). Ver. 6. Teacheth this, that God is the only judge to allow and disallow; men must not therefore stand upon themselves, or other men's judgments. For what are we that condemn another man's servant? He standeth or falleth to his own master. (*Thomas Wilcocks.*)

*The godly man happy*:—The Prophet will maintain a godly man, against all comers, to be the only Jason, for winning the golden fleece of blessedness; the other, that he will make it good upon the heads of all the wicked; that howsoever they make a show in the world of being happy, yet they of all men are most miserable. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *The blessed man*:—Happiness is our nature's end and aim, and David tells us here who finds it. He describes his character—I. **NEGATIVELY**. But all this is negative; and in a world such as this, and with a nature such as ours, no small part of religion consists in avoiding evil. Still, a negative religion is not sufficient. God's Word is, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." A man may "not swear," but does he "pray"? He may not rob, but does he relieve the poor? Therefore we have the

blessed man described—II. POSITIVELY. "His delight," &c. It is so, whether the law be the moral law or the Word of God. Much more may we say this who have the complete Bible. Day and night, our thoughts ever follow our affections. (*W. Jay.*) *The true Christian*:—1. He is set forth as a "man." Sin un-mans, reduces the volume and value of manhood, until it brings its victim to a revolting animalism. The Christian is restored by grace to true manhood. 2. As a "happy man." Happiness is the flower and fruit of piety. Misery, the natural child of sin. None are so happy as those whom God makes happy. 3. As avoiding unholy society. As oil will not mix with water, light cannot co-exist with darkness, so piety cannot live in the poisonous atmosphere of evil-doers. Where there is no affinity of nature there can be no sympathy and fellowship of spirit. The tropical plant will quickly die at the roots in the Arctic region; and the saint cannot pass over to the frigid zone of the worldling's society, but at the peril of his sainthood—his life. 4. As a student of Divine truth. Religion makes men thoughtful. He is a glad student. "His delight is in"; a diligent student. "Day and night." It is not a nine days' spell which novelty has thrown over him. He meditates in it in the "day" of prosperity, and does not forget to do so in the "night" of adversity. 5. Under a beautiful and suggestive figure. "Like a tree." He does not grow up a Christian, he is planted as such. Religion is not natural, but engendered. He is well-positioned. "By the rivers of water." As a consequence he is "fruitful." No fruit in the life is a proof of no grace in the heart. He is always in "season." "There are special times for the manifestation of suitable graces. Liberality when riches increase. Humility when cheered by others. Patience in suffering. Resignation in bereavement. Faith in trial." He is "ever-green." "His leaf also shall not wither." The beauty of the believer is holiness, the communicated "beauty of the Lord our God." The sap of grace is always in circulation, hence his leaf does not wither. 6. Prosperous in all his undertakings. "There is no lack to them that walk uprightly." "Godliness is great gain." 7. As divinely known. "Knoweth the way of the righteous" (ver. 6). His knowledge covers the minutiae of his life as well as the particulars of the road. This Divine knowledge is comforting, stimulating, faith-emboldening, &c. Such is the inspired portrait of the "happy" or godly man. In contrast we have the "ungodly man." He is like "chaff," without worth, or use, or root; the sport of the wind of circumstances, passions, frivolities, worldliness, sensuality, &c., devoid of true manliness, decision of character, &c. Ver. 5 sets him forth as morally incapacitated to stand in the Court of Justice; and also as morally disqualified to associate with the holy. Both he and his way shall perish. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *A certain prescription for happiness*:—There is a very beautiful story told of a king who, when he came to his throne a young man, had a silver bell made and placed in a high tower of his palace. Then the announcement was set forth that whenever the king was happy his subjects would know it by the ringing of this bell. It was never to be rung except when the king was perfectly happy, and then by no hand but his own. Days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, and the months into years; but no sound of the bell rang out either day or night to tell that the king was happy. At last the king, grown old and grey in his palace, lay on his death-bed. His weeping subjects gathered around him, and he learned how through all the years his people had loved him; and then he was happy, and in his joy, with dying hands, he rang out the silver bell. How many years of wasted happiness because the king did not come to know and appreciate the love of his people! The little story may suggest to us a still greater loss in ourselves. Only the consciousness of God's love can make us perfectly happy. Many people go through life from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, and the lines of care deepen in their faces, and the silver bell of happiness never rings out, because all the while they are getting further from God, and there is no consciousness of that Divine love which alone can give perfect happiness and peace to the human heart. We have in this Psalm the thought of a keen-brained and spiritually instructed man as to what is required to make a happy man. We have here the testimony of a man of broad experience. David sets forth, at the beginning, that there are three things which it is important that we shall not do if we are to lead happy lives. The first of these is walking in the counsel of the ungodly. I do not understand that he intended to teach that to come under this head it is necessary for a man to seek out ungodly people and ask their advice as to how he shall live. The danger is far more insidious than that. The trouble is that ungodly people are always ready to speak their counsels of evil and lead others

astray by them. Eve did not send for the devil to come and advise her, but he came of his own accord and spit forth his lying sophistries about the Lord. Many young men and women come to the city from Christian homes, expecting to live a frank Christian life; but in the boarding-house, or the store or shop where they work, they are thrown into touch with ungodly people, who are ready at every turn with sceptical and insinuating remarks about the Church and about Christianity. Their counsels are for laxity of faith and conduct. Rev. W. L. Watkinson, in a recent sermon, recalls the fact that while we are careful to do our utmost to protect great buildings from fire and tempest, yet all the while those buildings are liable to another peril, certainly not less severe—the subtle decay of the very framework of the structure itself. The tissue of the wood silently and mysteriously deteriorates, and a calamity dire as a conflagration is precipitated. Many people think they are all right because they are not committing outbreking sins, while the counsels to which they are listening, and the associations to which they are lending themselves, are really undermining all their spiritual strength. The fibre of will and conscience and feeling is secretly eaten away, and some day they awake to find they no longer possess the faith, the sensibility, and the resolution of other days. No swift and violent assault of world or flesh or devil has torn or stained them, but it has been like a moth fretting a garment. In the physical world sunshine is the sure antidote to the dry rot. So the only antidote to the counsels of the ungodly is to turn from them to the beams which fall from the Sun of Righteousness. Happiness does not lie in the counsels of the ungodly, but in fellowship with “the children of the light.” Another place that the happy man must avoid is “the way of sinners.” “The way of sinners” is the way of sorrow and unhappiness. Whatever of good it promises it is a false way. It may seem attractive, but you may be sure that the end of the way is misery. The other day in New York city there was an auction sale, by a railroad company, of a quantity of unclaimed chests, valises, and parcels. Some of these packages brought large prices. Many of them sold for a great many times their worth. The fiercest bidding was over a prosperous-looking trunk. It was strongly made, and, although not very heavy, the speculators who examined its exterior concluded that it contained articles of value. One of them finally secured it for fifty-five dollars, and promptly prised it open, when he found within it only a disjointed human skeleton, which had probably been the property of some medical student. It is easy to understand the chagrin of the purchaser who, instead of gold and jewels, found only those relics of death. Multitudes have experienced a similar disappointment, but one infinitely more sorrowful, when they have discovered the real nature of the prizes which they gained by sin. There is still another place that a man if he will be really happy must avoid, and that is, “the seat of the scornful.” God have mercy on the boy who has gone so far that he can make a joke of his mother’s religion, that he can make a sneer about his father’s God, that he can scorn the voice of God’s Word that calls him to repentance! The sarcasm and cynicism and scorn of a sharp wit is often very fascinating to young people, but I assure you that the man who exercises it is never happy. It is a blossom which grows on a tree that is bitter at the heart. I have seen many scornful men and women, but I have never yet seen one who was happy. Well, we have been looking at some of the things one must not do if he is to be happy; let us turn to the brighter side, and see what one may do to ensure happiness. The prescription is given here, and is very plain. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.” But, you say, “How can I delight in the law of the Lord, and how can I begin to think about Him, if I am taken up with other things?” It is all very simple. You have been breaking God’s law, and therefore you cannot delight in it. Stop breaking it. Turn right about and begin to obey the law of the Lord, and then you will have a chance to delight in it. God has made happiness and obedience to go together. As you obey the Lord, and as you feel the warmth of His smile on your face, you will take delight in Him. All this is perfectly natural. The man who has committed a crime, and has broken the law of the land, and is fleeing from justice like a hunted animal, or has been caught and is being punished, takes no delight in that law. But the man who obeys the law and finds its strong arm of protection thrown around him, and rejoices in its security, delights in it, and in the consciousness of the presence of the law he finds rest and peace. And what a glorious result is assured from such delight in the law of the Lord: “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,” &c. What a beautiful picture that is! Ah, but, you say, “Does God live up to that? Do



not many Christians have hard experiences, and trying difficulties like other people?" Certainly, the hot sun beats down on the tree planted by the river just the same as it does on the one that is planted on the gravelly, sandy upland. But the one by the river runs its roots down into the refreshing streams beneath, and when the upland tree withers and turns brown the tree by the river is as green as ever. Christians meet the troubles of life like other people, but if they give themselves up whole-heartedly to do God's will, and delight in the law of the Lord, they have peace and content in the midst of the sorest trouble. You want happiness. There is only one certain prescription for happiness, and that is to obey God. (L. A. Banks, D.D.)

*The happy man*.—The opening words of this Psalm furnish its title *Ashrey ha-ish*, "O the happiness of that man!" If ever a man pursued happiness under the most favourable conditions, it was King Solomon; yet this was his conclusion of the whole matter, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." John Trapp said quaintly, "The Psalmist hath said here more to the point respecting happiness than all the philosophers; for while they beat the bush, he hath put the bird into our hand." I. AS TO THE CHARACTER OF THIS HAPPY MAN.

"He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." We must needs be in the world—not dreamers among the shadows, but men among men. The world has need of us. The workshop and the office demand us. The secular cares of this world are, of necessity, upon us. But the secret of true happiness is moral non-conformity. Being in the world, we should not be of it. While our associations must needs be in some measure with the ungodly, their counsels, their ways, their seats are not for us. God's people go to their offices and their workshops just like other men, but their affections are not set upon this world; they are ever mindful of their noble birth, their Divine inheritance, their glorious destiny.

II. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE DIVINE LAW. The "Law of the Lord" was a Jewish phrase for the Scriptures. The happy man possesses a right estimate of the importance of the Word of God.

1. He is a reader of the Scriptures. Thomas à Kempis said, "I am never so happy as when in a nook with the Book." 2. He reads "with delight." We are much given in these times to a critical study of the Word. The way to appreciate the beauty of Murillo's picture of the Immaculate Conception is not to approach it with spatula and ammonia for purposes of minute analysis, but to gaze upon it until we are filled with the mighty thoughts that went surging through the soul of the master-genius who painted it. 3. He meditates in them. St. Augustine renders the word "chattereth." So in these spring days we hear the sparrows chattering with their hearts full of the prophecy of bloom and fruitfulness. So glad and happy are the souls that meditate with delight in the Divine law.

III. THE OUTCOME OF THIS HAPPY LIFE. Fruitfulness. "Like a tree." This life is rooted well. Its leaf shall not wither. The leaf shows the character of the tree. The man whose soul is full of truth and righteousness need not be saying perpetually, "I am a Christian," for his walk and conversation declare it. He bringeth forth fruit in his season. We shall be ever doing good as we have opportunity. There is an obverse to this picture. "The ungodly are not so." 1. As to his life—it is chaff. There is no profit in it. 2. As to his death—it is like a furrow in the sea. 3. After death, he shall "not stand in judgment." Most of us have been disappointed in our pursuit of happiness. There is, however, a right way and a sure way to pursue it. (D. J. Burrell, D.D.)

*The way of the righteous*.—I. A STRIKING DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF THE RIGHTEOUS. Among the evil, as well as the good, there are classes and gradations. Here we have forgetters of God, overt and habitual sinners, and settled scorners. How graphically is the progressive tendency of sin here exhibited! Observe the indication we here have of the tendency of sin to fixedness. Walking, standing, sitting; wrong principles, then sinful habits, and last settled scorn. But the righteous man is not simply one who keeps aloof from the ways described. His character has its positive side. It is needful to discriminate with respect to the kind of delight the righteous man takes in the law. How much there is in the Bible of valuable history! Its truths and precepts kindle the intellect, feed the imagination, and commend themselves to man's natural sense of what is true and good. The delight of the Psalmist is, however, something deeper and other than this. It is delight in the law as God's law, and because it is His. It is the delight of a mind in sympathetic accord with it and with its Author. Even in the Old Testament saint there was much of this spirit. Here is the difference between a truly righteous man and one who is only outwardly so. The latter obeys slavishly, and against his own will. The former serves joyfully, and in love. The interest the one takes in



the Bible is intellectual; that of the other is also practical and spiritual. II. A DELIGHTFUL PICTURE OF THE CONDITION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "Like a tree." The tree draws a portion of its nourishment from the surrounding atmosphere, but relatively this is small. Vastly the greater portion is taken up with the moisture at its root. Hence where there is little moisture the life of the tree is feeble, its growth is slow, its fruit is uncertain, its leaf withers. So it is doubtless true that the godly man derives material for growth, usefulness, enjoyment, and moral beauty from whatever surrounds him. He learns from nature, society, books; he derives profit and adornment from studies, companionship, and experience; but for that which is highest and best, whether of comfort, attainment, or serviceableness to his generation, he is indebted to revealed truth. It is this which sustains his true inner life. In ver. 3 there is a change of figure. Of the righteous it is said, "and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The meaning doubtless is that he shall prosper in all his godly doings; in the things to which the Divine will and word may prompt him; in those righteous undertakings by which he is distinguished. In other ages, if not now, it shall appear that nought of such labour was lost. It would be a mistake to understand, by the fruit here spoken of, external works only, or chiefly. The fruit of the spirit is "in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." It is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." First of all, it is inward, then outward. It would be equally a mistake to suppose that the leaf, which does not wither, is the symbol only of the honour and beauty which crown the character of the godly. Doubtless it stands for this. But the leaf is also useful. And that, too, not only in the pleasure it ministers to the beholder's eye, or the shade it affords to the passing traveller. Its benefits may reach very far. "The fresh air we quaff from the hills has been purified and made healthy for us by the foliage of the trees, not merely those of our own country, but even the pines of Norway and the palms of India." And so the godly man is blessed in what he is and what he does. III. A CHEERING INTIMATION OF THE HAPPY END WHICH AWAITS THE RIGHTEOUS. As is so often the case in the Bible, thought abruptly passes from time to eternity. Indeed, to the eye of faith, these are one: the latter is but the continuation of the former. Naturally, therefore, the characters contrasted in the Psalm are now made to appear for judgment. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The blessed man's likeness:*—Notes on verses. Ver. 1. Ignorance is often bliss. All the characters mentioned here may have their excellence. The ungodly may be rich, the sinners convivial, the scornful brilliant, yet blessed is the man that has nothing to do with them. Blessed is the man who knows not the language or the masonry of the wicked. Ver. 2. The idea is that of the man who sees the law of the Lord in all nature, history, and life, and delights to trace it out. The "Law of the Lord" is not simply so much letter-press, it is a life, a presence, a government. Ver. 3. Where God is there is no famine. The likeness to a tree is full of suggestion. A tree is permanent, fruitful, beautiful; its branches are for refreshment, its shadow is for rest. It responds to the sun and the rain. It waits for God, and puts forth life at His bidding. "Prosper." In no mean or narrow sense, but really and ultimately. If you say that, as a fact, the good man does not always prosper, remember that you may say the same thing about God Himself. Ver. 4. Some ungodly men seem to be well established; they have more than heart can wish. But these are appearances only. At a distance chaff might be mistaken for wheat. The distinction is a vital one. To know where the wicked are, you must know where the wind is—the wind of popularity, success, Divine visitation. Ver. 5. There is a judgment, a true and final test of character. Where are the ungodly of the last generation? Ver. 6. Mark the three characters. The godly, ungodly, the Lord. The question is not what is the relation of the godly and the ungodly to each other; but what is that of each to the Lord? Are you blessed? Are you merely transiently happy? What is your fruit? (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The blessed man:*—1. He is partly described by negatives. We begin with children by teaching them what they must not do. The man who "walketh in the counsel of the ungodly" is not a happy man. Nowhere in the devil's territories can you find the happy man. Men who have run the whole round of so-called enjoyment unite to say, "If you want to be happy, avoid our footprints." And yet it seems as if every young man must go and try for himself. He will not take the experience of others; or follow the directions of the "caution-board." 2. He is partly described by what he should do. God does not destroy our powers, but turns them in a right direction. How can we be happy? Study. He who thinks grows. Meditate in the "Law of the Lord." We are

not a Bible-reading people. The old-fashioned people in the Church were. Note the consequences of this "delight in the Law of the Lord." Beauty. Righteous men should have beauty of character. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." When we fail the fault is ours, or if it be not, then the failure is for the sake of the success it shall lead to. "The ungodly are not so." The sinner has a brief day. It may not seem so now; but God says, he is "like the chaff." But we should not seek happiness as an end. Seek goodness, and the happiness will come. (*Ibid.*) *The character of the pious and profane*:—I. A CERTAIN COURSE DESCRIBED. Here is a twofold gradation implied, the one relating to the characters referred to, and the other to the intercourse maintained. II. A SACRED EXERCISE DESCRIBED. "In His law doth he meditate." The godly man delights in the Law of the Lord for many reasons. 1. Because it enriches his mind. 2. It cheers his heart. 3. It sanctifies his nature. III. AN ENCOURAGING ASSURANCE GIVEN. "He shall be like a tree." Note the connection between loving the Scriptures and spiritual prosperity. IV. A SOLEMN CONTRAST DRAWN. The ungodly are like the chaff. Chaff is a thing that is—1. Unsightly. There is nothing to excite pleasurable emotions in the ungodly. 2. Worthless. Chaff cannot be turned, even in our inventive age, to any beneficial purpose. 3. Light and unsubstantial. There is no stability in the ungodly. They are tossed to and fro with every wind of temptation; and, being influenced by caprice rather than principle, no confidence can be placed in them. The Psalmist adds, "therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment." To "stand" is a forensic term, and denotes "to stand acquitted," and with those who live and die ungodly such cannot be the case. V. A CONCLUSIVE REASON ADDUCED. "For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (*Expository Outlines.*) *The refusals of godliness*:—But negatives in this case could not be denied; for if he had left out negatives, he had left out a great part of the worth and praise of godliness—for a godly man cannot always run in smooth ground—he shall sometimes meet with rubs; he cannot always breathe in sweet airs—he shall sometimes meet with ill savours; he cannot always sail in safe seas—he shall sometimes meet with rocks; and then it is his praise that he can pass over those rubs, can pass through those savours, can pass by those rocks, and yet keep himself upright and untainted, and untouched of them all. Besides, negative precepts are in some cases more absolute and peremptory than affirmatives: for to say, "That hath walked in the counsel of the ungodly," might not be sufficient; for he might walk in the counsel of the godly, and yet walk in the counsel of the ungodly too; not both indeed at once, but both at several times; where now this negative clears him at all times. And may it not also be a cause of using negatives, because it seems an easier way of showing what a thing is, by showing what it is not, than by using only affirmative marks; especially where a perfect induction may be made. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *Things marred by ungodliness*:—We must yet go further, and the next word we come to is ungodly, and now certainly we shall have a full negative, for ungodliness is the herb that marreth all the broth, it poisons all the company that it comes in,—not only walking, a thing in itself indifferent, but even counsel, a thing in its own nature most sovereign: they are both marred by this one ingredient of ungodliness. Walking in counsel had been a safe proceeding, if the ungodly had not given it; standing in the way had been a lawful calling, if sinners had not made it; sitting in a chair had been an easy posture, if scorers had not framed it; but if the ungodly, or sinners, or scorers have any hand at all in our actions, have anything to do in our doings, both safety, and lawfulness, and ease, and all are utterly overthrown. (*Ibid.*) *The counsel of ungodly men*:—But have, then, ungodly men counsel? One would think it were want of counsel that makes them ungodly, for who would be ungodly if he had counsel to direct him? Certainly, counsel they have, and wise counsel too; that is, wise in the eye of the world, and wise for the works of the world: but wise in the sight of God, and wise for the works of godliness, they have not; and in that kind of wisdom ungodly men are your greatest counsellors—greatest in the ability of counsel, and greatest in the busying themselves with counselling. The poison of asps is under their lips. It serves not their turn to do wickedly in their own persons, but they must be drawing others into wickedness by poisoning and infecting them with wicked counsel. (*Ibid.*) *Stages in sin*:—They which think it an ascent, conceive it thus, that he which walketh in the counsel of the ungodly is yet but wavering, as misled by opinion, and makes but an error; he that stands in the way of sinners, stands out with obstinacy, and makes a heresy; but he that sits in the chair of scorers is at defiance with God, and makes an apostasy. They

who think it a descent do thus conceive it: he which walks in the counsel of the ungodly, delights and takes a pleasure in his sin; he which stands in the way of sinners, stands in doubt, and is unresolved in his sin; but he who sits in the seat of the scornful, sits down and sins but for his ease, as being unable to suffer persecution. They who think it an ascent, conceive that the ungodly are but beginners in ill; that sinners are proficient in ill; but the scornful are graduates and doctors of the chair in ill. They who think it a descent, conceive that the ungodly are opposite to the godly, and offend generally; that sinners offend, though actually, yet but in particulars; that scornful might be sound at heart, if they did not set themselves to sale, and sin for promotion. The ascent may be briefly thus: that walking expresseth less resolution than standing, and standing than sitting; but in sin, the more resolute, the more dissolute: therefore sitting is the worst. The descent thus: that walking expresseth more strength than standing, and standing than sitting; for a child can sit when he cannot stand, and stand when he cannot walk; but the stronger in sin, the worse; therefore walking is the worst. Many such ways there are of conceiving diversity, either in ascending or descending; but it needs be no question which is the worse, because, without question, they are all stark nought: they are three rocks, whereof the least is enough to make a shipwreck; they are three pestilential airs, whereof the best is enough to poison the heart. This only may be observed, that howsoever the case alter with walkers and sitters, yet standers in the way of sinners keep their standing still; and whichsoever is first or last, yet they are sure to be the second. But is it not that we mistake the Prophet, and make his words a gradation, when, perhaps, he meant them for level ground? And for such, indeed, we may take them, and do as well, and then there will not be either ascent or descent in the sins themselves, but only a diversity in their causes; as that the first is a sin caused by ill counsel; the second, a sin caused by ill example; the third, a sin caused by the innate corruption of our own hearts. Or is it that the Prophet alludes here to the three principal ages of our life, which have every one of them their proper vices, as it were, retainers to them?—and therefore the vices of youth, which is the vigour of life, and delights most in motion and society, he expresseth by walking in the counsel of the ungodly; the vices of the middle age, which is the steadfast age, he expresseth by standing in the way of sinners; the vices of old age, which, being weak and feeble, is scarce able to go, he expresseth by sitting in the chair of scornful, and it is as if he had said, “Blessed is the man that hath passed through all the ages of his life, and hath kept himself untainted of the vices that are incident unto them.” (*Ibid.*) *The way of sin dangerous*.—But a godly man is wiser than so; though he know that the way is large and broad, yet he knows also that the press is great; a man cannot stand here, but he shall be shouldered and thrust forward in spite of his teeth. (*Ibid.*) *Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly*.—*Companions*.—We are all of us naturally of such a social tendency that the influence of companionship is necessarily great. And this is so especially in youth. Moralists, like Cicero, have made friendship the theme of some of their purest teaching and counsel. Scripture tells us of Jonathan and David, and this Psalm gives a hint of the insidious gradations by which companionship attains its mastery over habit and character. Like a skillful angler “playing” a fish, so does a congenial associate attach us to his company. He draws the glamour of his power about us, till we become wholly his. At first we meet him from time to time, “walking in his counsels”; then we protract the interview, and invite ascendancy as we “stand in his way”; and at length we capitulate to his domination as we “sit down in his seat.” Now, if it be good to resist such influence in the case of the ungodly, it is equally good to yield to it in the case of the upright. Nothing more important than the choice of associates. Avoid such as—

I. **DESIRE YOU RATHER AS THEIR PREY THAN THEIR FRIEND.** They protest vehement friendship; there is nothing they will not do for you; all that they have is at your service. These are not safe men who overact their part in this way.

II. **THE POP AND ROUÉ.** The plucking of pigeons has been an art studied and perfected by knaves of fashion in every age, and has flung filth upon escutcheons which had known no shame, and blasted many a prospect of a noble future.

III. **THE EXTRAVAGANT.** We find it easy to declare that poverty is no disgrace; yet it is rare to find amongst the young the moral hardihood which can say, “I can’t afford it.” In humbler life it is by tens of thousands, not by ones or twos, that you may count the well born and the well trained who have fallen, some into suicide, some into prisons, some to the gallows, all into disgrace by becoming companions of those who have tempted them into extravagance.

IV. **BETTING MEN.**



The slowly rising pittance of the clerk will not let him keep pace with the expensive pleasures of his rich associate, and fraud and forgery are led up to by the sure pathway of the betting ring. V. THE FLATTERER, the sponge, who desires only to exhaust your purse. The cynic too. He is a flatterer who has established his ascendancy so completely that he can afford to be rude. You cannot make a friend of a bully. VI. AND LET BOTH YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS BE VERY CAREFUL OF THE COMPANIONSHIPS WHICH THEY FORM, ONE WITH THE OTHER. A young man will do well who makes an honourable union the goal of his industry; and let her whose troth is challenged have nought to do with one whose life is stained with an unmanly taint. Choose Christian friendships, for companionship is the leaven of our lives and solitude their bane.\* But there is no solitude to him who has learned to cancel it with pure thought and spiritual communion. Healthy literature, taste, art, music, come with votive offerings to him who lingers by their chastened altars. But the best friendship is that of those whose Master is Christ. When the disciples were let go they went to their own company. Go you to yours, and let it be the company which gathers round the Lord. (*Arthur Mursell.*) *Avoiding evil doers:*—Like the Sermon on the Mount, this description of the way of the righteous begins with a "blessed." Those who go down into the busy streets day by day are in constant contact with those who are without God in the world. Not necessarily bad men in the common phrase, but possibly high-minded, free-hearted, companionable men, who yet have left God out of their lives. They do nothing to please Him. A part of the testing of our characters comes out in the fact that we do not always know we are walking in the counsel of the ungodly when we are really doing so. It is a hard thing not to adopt the way in which people around us look at things, and the way of looking at things accounts in large measure for what we do. An atmosphere, intangible and still real, is thrown around all characters, and the moment we come into this atmosphere it affects us. If it is the atmosphere of prayer, and faith, and high endeavour, we feel without realising it, even when nothing is said to show the trend of thought. "Nor standeth in the way of sinners." We note the advance in wrong. "Sinners" is a stronger characterisation of bad associates than the phrase "ungodly," and "standing" is a more thorough committal to them than "walking." It implies more deliberation. Naturally, he who stands with sinners and gives his leisure to their friendship is fast reaching the day when he will sit with the scornors. What makes the scorner the worst case to reform? It is because a radical change has come over him, and evil has become his good. Embittered against the way which he has lost, he makes virtue a mockery. One who is in daily association with evil may not realise the loss he is meeting, may not see the bloom fade from the ripe peach, or from the hanging cluster of grapes, but the scorner is in a hell of his own. He has lost the childhood of the heart to which he must come back before he can see and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Coming to the positive marks of the way of the righteous, we find that he delights in the law of the Lord, and meditates upon it day and night. This marks a high and almost perfect stage of moral attainment, and creates a certain loveliness in its possessor which a mere determination to do right never can do. We love those who love to do right and sing in the ways of the Lord, whose moral movements are not the working of bands and pulleys, but the curves of the bird in the free air or the bending of the tender grasses under the breeze. Effort pains us, but ease charms us. What a rare and wonderful thing it is to find joy in a rule—the law of God. We must get the law into the heart and say it without thinking, and live it by a second nature. And never since the Bible was given to men has there been so much study upon its form and details. Is there a corresponding "meditation" upon it? Meditation is to thought and study what autumn is to summer—the ripe fruitage of past toil. (*E. N. Packard.*) *The triads of transgression:*—I. THREE CLASSES OF TRANSGRESSORS. Shun them! 1. Ungodly.—Generally those who are (a) ignorant of God, (b) deny, or (c) defy God. Here means *restless* people. 2. Sinners.—The restless missing his way. 3. Scornors.—Mockers, pests, impostors (Psa. xxvi. 4-9). II. THREE INDUCEMENTS TO TRANSGRESS. Resist them! 1. Counsel.—Flattering and deceptive. Satan in Eden and the wilderness. 2. Way.—Broad and attractive (Matt. vii. 13, 14). 3. Seat.—Boisterous and popular. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." III. THREE DEGREES OF TRANSGRESSION. Avoid them! 1. Walking.—Initiatory. 2. Standing.—Secondary. 3. Sitting.—Grand Lodge degree in iniquity. "The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. iv. 14-18). "Wherefore come out from among them" (2 Cor. vi. 17). (*Homiletic Review.*) *Getting used to an ungodly atmosphere:*—

To make my meaning clearer, suppose a person steps out of pure air into a rather close room: the air is at first disagreeable and oppressive, he does not breathe freely, but in a little while he gets more used to it, and after a while he hardly is aware that the room is close, and that he is breathing impure air. Suppose also that then he goes into another room, which is much closer, the air of it much more impure: it will not seem to him, coming as he does from the first room, to be worse than the first room seemed when he came from the pure air. This just describes the way in which the man who is beginning to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, allowing himself to be influenced by them, soon learns to breathe at ease in an ungodly atmosphere. Probably his conscience is uneasy as he steps from his place of safety, but he soon accustoms himself to his new position, and then he is ready for the next step, and there is every prospect of his taking it. **Nor standeth in the way of sinners.**—*Counsels to the young*:—I. THE INFECTIOUS NATURE OF SIN, and the danger of walking in the counsel of the ungodly. These warnings have been so often repeated and are now commonplace, not because they are unimportant, but because the good and wise of all ages have felt the necessity of them. 1. We are all prone to sin. 2. And the young are ignorant and unsuspicious. 3. Vice is usually baited with pleasure. 4. The difficulty of bearing ridicule, which in corrupt society the young are exposed to.

II. THE HARDENING NATURE OF SIN. 1. Its progress is gradual and insensible. 2. The strength and power of inveterate habit. III. THE FINISHING STAGE OF WICKEDNESS. To be of the scornful. On which note—1. The sin and danger of it to the scornful themselves. It is an audacious attack upon the majesty of the living God, and must strike every thinking person with horror. And this is not a sudden sin, but deliberate. Such contempt of sacred things shows an entire victory over conscience: all reluctance is gone. Also, over shame, and they design to destroy it in the minds of others. 2. Its sad influence. For it is public, and intended to be so. It is an open advocacy of sin and an endeavour to break the restraints of conscience in others as well as themselves. Its malignant influence is seen in the fear that most persons have in opposing fashionable crimes. It lays hold on some human weakness that has been accidentally associated with religion, and ridicules religion as if it also were weak. Socrates was certainly the wisest and best of the men of Greece. His behaviour was such as demanded the esteem of all who knew him; yet was this worthy man successfully turned into ridicule by one whose writings are to the last degree contemptible. But yet this ridicule paved the way for the enmity which was raised against him, and which brought him to death. So ridicule often slays religion in the soul. Therefore let the young beware of evil company. Let parents strive to train their children in religion, and let all Christian men stand up boldly against profanity and vice and deal with these sins as they deserve. (*J. Witherspoon, D.D.*)

*True and false friendship*:—False friendship is like the gaudy but scentless sunflower, that will bloom only in the sunshine of prosperity. True friendship, planted in mutual love and nourished by Christian principles, is like the sweet but modest violet that will flourish even in the dark shade of adversity, and will yield only fresh odours when trampled on by unkindly tread. (*R. Venting.*)

*Association with sinners*:—The unhappy bids to associate with the profane arise from two causes. 1. That rigorousness and austerity which some gloomy-minded Christians attach to their religion. God and nature have established no connection between sanctity of character and severity of manners. To rejoice evermore is not only the privilege, it is also the duty of a Christian. The votaries of vice put on the mask of mirth, they counterfeit gladness amidst the horrors of guilt. 2. The opinion that wickedness, particularly some kinds of it, are manly and becoming; that dissoluteness, infidelity, and blasphemy are indications of a sprightly and a strong mind. Those who have shone in all ages as the lights of the world, with a few exceptions, have been uniformly on the side of goodness, and have been as distinguished in the temple of virtue as they were illustrious in the temple of fame. (*J. Logan.*)

*Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*—*A happy retrospect*:—Sir Walter Scott near the end of his life said, "I have been the most voluminous author of the day. It is a comfort to me to think that I have tried to unsettle no man's faith, to corrupt no man's principles." (*Quiver.*) *The fear of ridicule*:—As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool, and he is a poor invertebrate creature who allows himself to be laughed down when he attempts to stick to his principles and tries to do what he believes to be right. "Learn from the earliest days," says Sydney Smith, "to insure your principles against the perils of ridicule; you can no more exercise your reason if you live in the constant dread of laughter,

than you can enjoy your life if you are in constant terror of death. No coward is greater than he who dares not to be wise because fools will laugh at him." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord.—*The law of the Lord*:—We should all like to be blessed, and here is the way—delight in the law of the Lord. I. WHAT IS THIS LAW? Not the Mosaic, not the ceremonial law, for which God often cared nothing; but the law according to which the Lord hath ordered all things. This is the law which God says He will put into our hearts and write on our minds. This is that true and eternal law of which Solomon speaks in his Proverbs as the Wisdom by which God made the heavens: and he tells us that that Wisdom is a tree of life to all who lay hold on her. This is that law which the inspired philosopher—for philosopher he was indeed—who wrote that 119th Psalm, continually prayed and strove to learn. Christ perfectly fulfilled it. He said, with His whole heart, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God." The will of God, for this law is nothing else. By keeping it we are blessed. What God has willed we should be and do. But if so, it is plain we must heed the warnings of the first verse. For no one will learn God's will if he takes counsel from the ungodly; or if he stand in the way of profligate and dishonest men. If he do this, all he will learn of God's law is the dreadful part of it told of in the 2nd Psalm. God will "rule him with a rod of iron, and break," &c. But there is more hope for him—if he repent—than if he sits in the seat of the scorers—the sneering, the frivolous, the unbelieving, who laugh down religion as enthusiasm and worse. When the greatest poet of our days tried to picture his idea of a fiend tempting man to ruin, he gave him just such a character as this: a very clever, agreeable, courteous man of the world, and yet a being who could not love any one, and believed not in any one; who mocked at both man and God, and who tempted and ruined men in mere sport as a cruel child may torment a fly. Such was Mephistopheles. Beware, therefore, of the scornful as well as of the openly sinful. And remember—II. THIS LAW IS THE LAW OF THE LORD—our Lord Jesus Christ. Who can stand with Him? "Why do the heathen rage," &c. Men will not believe in this law. But sooner or later they have to, and often in terrible ways they find out their mistake. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." For Christ is on the throne of the universe. And His might and power are continually being made known. Even now He bruises His enemies as with a rod of iron. It is of no use to talk about the goodness of God and of the gentleness of Christ. We flatter ourselves that if gentle, He may be also indulgent and weak. But there is an awful side to His character. Think of these things. You are kings—at least over yourselves; and judges—at least of your own conduct. Therefore let each and all of us, high and low, take the warning and love law—for that is the true meaning—before the Son of God, as subjects before an absolute monarch, because His will is only and always a good will. (*Charles Kingsley.*) *The good man's delight*:—I. SUCH DELIGHT IS NECESSARY. By "the law of the Lord" we mean religion both experimental and practical. Now such delight in it is necessary for a Christian man, because—1. Without it there is no heart in religion. But the very essence of religion lies in the heart. 2. Works and acts acceptable to God will not be produced. But it is for these that religion is designed. 3. A man cannot be a true Christian and understand the true gospel without feeling a delight in it. The true gospel, mark you, for there are gospels preached by some men that no man can delight in. But the true gospel must make the heart happy. II. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS DELIGHT. 1. He will continually think of the law of the Lord. 2. He will be sure to speak of it. There is too little conversation now about Christ. I suppose it is with some Christians as the sailor said it was with the parrot. He had a remarkable parrot which he sold to a good woman, telling her it could talk no end of things. After she had kept it a week and it had said nothing, she took it back to the sailor. "Well, ma'am," said he, "I dare say it has not said much, but it has thought the more." And there are people like that parrot. Like it, too, in that the parrot did not think, though the sailor said it did. Nor do they, or else if they had thought they would have spoken. What is in the well will come up in the bucket. 3. Endeavours to spread the knowledge of it. 4. And will not rest until he has brought others to delight in it also. III. THE HAPPY EFFECTS OF THIS DELIGHT. 1. It will make a man bold. 2. Very calm and quiet in the day of affliction. 3. It will prepare him for heaven. To you who have no such delight, this law of the Lord, which was designed to be your delight, will become your scourge. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A meditative life*:—I. THIS PSALM IS NOT A COM-



MENTATION OF A MEDITATIVE LIFE ONLY. We cannot in this world of imperative work live such a life. Those in cloisters and convents have tried and failed. As when we fix the eyes on one object only, they get weary, filmy, dull. But rightly understood, our life is to be far more than meditation. It is to be like a tree planted and bringing forth fruit. The man is to be a doer, and what he does is to prosper. The law on which he meditates is specially related to men's active life. It is not merely to be thought about, but practically obeyed. Merely to meditate on it would be as if a soldier, having received from the general's hand the order book, were to take that book to his tent and were to sit down and spend all the hours of the day admiring his general's skill and the grasp of his mind instead of proceeding to obey the orders and to prepare the army for the impending battle. II. THE MEDITATION HERE COMMENDED IS ONE THOROUGHLY CONSISTENT WITH WORKING, ACTIVE LIFE; indeed, is for this very thing. And the happy man is he who through meditation on God's law comes to live the life of holy service. He is to be "like a tree" as contrasted with "the chaff." Our lives must be as one or the other. III. NOTE THE FORCE OF THE IMAGE EMPLOYED. For a tree vividly sets forth the connection between thinking and working; between the roots and the fruit of conduct. Strong characters are produced only by strong thinking. Occasional, weak, fugitive thinking, even on good things, may exist—too often does—with evil lives. Thoughts must be deep, and go down to the roots of the soul and take possession of it. The ungodly man is he who does not take God into account. He acts upon expediency. Hence he is like the chaff. There are different sorts of trees, but any tree is better than the chaff. But seek to be like the tree told of here. IV. How? You must be "planted," that is, "transplanted." The tree has been put where it is designedly. And this is what meditation means. It is the self-planting of the man by the rivers of waters God has caused to flow forth for us from His Word. The rivers told of are not natural rivers, but artificial streams made for the purpose of irrigation. Solomon made many such in his day. And Hezekiah also. The Turkish Government has let them fall into decay, and hence Palestine is now nearly desert. Lord Lawrence made such streams for North-West India, to its vast advantage. Merv in Central Asia is an oasis in the desert, for the Turcomans have dammed up the streams that flow down from the Afghan mountains and led their waters along artificial canals, and so the country is watered and reclaimed. Day and night the dam is watched by Turcoman sentinels, for if it were once destroyed the country would again become desert. But the herbs and the trees will never lack for water while these streams are preserved, and as long as the snows abide on the hills which lift their white peaks against the distant sky. What a parable all this is! If we would toil so to bring the living waters of God's Word into the moral desert of our souls, what a reclamation of waste places there would be, what lives like trees bearing fruit! Missions, churches, worship are all such endeavours. And what a channel for such streams is a godly, consistent life! Such lives are ever a blessing. As a tree is a thing both of beauty and of use, so are they. And every God-filled man and woman is such a tree. This is the secret of the happy life. (*J. Vincent Tymms.*) *The godly man's pleasure*:—Note the Christian duty and holy practice of a godly man. He is much and often in serious and Christian meditation. He is conversant with Holy Scriptures; his meditation is concerning the "law," that is, the heavenly doctrine which shows the will of God and His worship, what man must and ought to believe and do to gain eternal life. It is his daily study and continual exercise. Not that he doth nothing else; the meaning is, he setteth some time apart daily to serve God. The godly man, who is truly blessed and happy, doth wonderfully love, and is greatly affected with the Word of Almighty God, and hath exceeding delight and joy in the doctrine of God, because there is revealed the will of God, whereunto men must be careful to frame and conform all their desires, thoughts, words, and deeds, because herein is chalked out and declared the very highway of eternal life and salvation. It is a special note and property of a godly man to perform Christian duties to God willingly and cheerfully, and to make them his delight and joy. (*Samuel Smith.*) *Blessed Bible reading*:—I. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. It is read—1. Independently. 2. Thoughtfully. 3. Frequently. 4. Submissively. 5. Gladly. 6. Prayerfully. II. THE RESULTS OF SUCH READING. 1. Stability of Christian character. 2. Fruitfulness. 3. Freshness and beauty. 4. Success in all his righteous undertakings. (*J. Morgan.*) *The good man in relation to the Word of God*:—I. HIS PRACTICE. "His delight is in," &c. How does he use the Bible? 1. He studies it independently. 2. Deeply. 3. Sympathetically. II. HIS

PLEASURE. "His delight is in," &c. 1. He enjoys the pleasure of congeniality. 2. Novelty. 3. Profit. III. HIS PROSPERITY. 1. He is stable. 2. Fair and fruitful. 3. Successful. (*J. Spencer Hill.*) *The believer's delight*:—1. The feeling with which the believer views the Holy Scriptures. 2. Some of the grounds which give rise to this delight in the heart of the believer. Its own intrinsic worth and excellence. (He knows by experience its quickening and converting power.) It has given and still gives the believer light. In the Word of God he has found peace. The Word gives the believer freedom. It consoles and supports the true believer in distress and temptation. 3. What is the result of this delight? What effect does this feeling produce upon the believer's practice? He "meditates" on the law of the Lord "day and night." (*C. R. Hay, M.A.*) *The saints' spiritual delight*:—1. The godly man is described by way of NEGATION, in three particulars. "Sitting" implies a habit in sin, familiarity with sinners. Diamonds and stones may lie together, but they will not solder or cement. II. By way of POSITION. The not being scandalous will no more make a good Christian than a cipher will make a sum. It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard he loseth his pay. 1. You may not be outwardly bad, and yet not inwardly good. Though you do not hang out your bush, yet you may secretly vend your commodity; a tree may be full of vermin, yet the fair leaves may cover them that they are not seen. 2. If you are only negatively good, God makes no reckoning of you, you are as so many ciphers in God's arithmetic, and He writes down no ciphers in the book of life. 3. A man may as well go to hell for not doing good as for doing evil. One may as well die with not eating food as with poison. A ground may as well be spoiled for want of good seed as with having tares sown in it. A twofold description of a godly man. III. HE DELIGHTS IN GOD'S LAW. A man may work in his trade and not delight in it, but a godly man serves God with delight. What is meant by the Law? Take the word more strictly and it means the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments. Take it more largely, it is the whole written Word of God; those truths deduced from the Word; the whole business of religion. The word is a setting forth, and religion a showing forth, of God and Law. What is meant by "delight in the law"? Heb. and Sept. render, "his will is in the law of the Lord," and that which is voluntary is delightful. A child of God, though he cannot serve the Lord perfectly, yet serves Him willingly. He is not a pressed soldier, but a volunteer. The saints' delight in the law of the Lord proceeds from—1. Soundness of judgment. The mind apprehends a beauty in God's law, now the judgment draws the affections, like so many orbs, after it. 2. From the predominancy of grace. When grace comes with authority and majesty upon the heart it fills it with delight. Grace puts a new bias into the will, it works a spontaneity and cheerfulness in God's service. 3. From the sweetness of the end. Well may we with cheerfulness let down the net of our endeavour when we have so excellent a draught. Heaven at the end of duty causeth delight in the way of duty. Two cases to be put. 1. Whether a regenerate person may not serve God with weariness. Yes; but this lassitude may arise from the inbeing of corruption (Rom. vii. 24). It is not, however, habitual, and it is involuntary. He is troubled by it. He is weary of his weariness. 2. Whether a hypocrite may not serve God with delight? He may, but his delight is carnal. How may this spiritual delight be known? He that delights in God's law is often thinking of it. If we delight in religion there is nothing can keep us from it, but we will be conversant in Word, prayer, sacraments. He that loves gold will trade for it. Those that delight in religion are often speaking of it. He that delights in God will give Him the best in every service. And he doth not much delight in anything else but God. True delight is constant. Hypocrites have their pangs of desire, and flashes of joy which are soon over. Delight in religion crowns all our services, evidenceth grace, will make the business of religion more facile to us. All the duties of religion are for our good. Delight in God's service makes us resemble the angels in heaven. Delight in God's law will not breed surfeit. Carnal objects do oft cause a loathing and nauseating. We soon grow weary of our delights. For the attaining of this delight set a high estimate upon the Word. Pray for a spiritual heart. Purge out the delight of sin. (*T. Watson.*) *Meditative Bible reading*:—"He shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water." Who shall? He whose delight is in the law of the Lord. His life shall be rooted in the richest of soils; he shall never lack resources; his soul shall delight itself in fatness. But what is "the law of the



Lord"? The laws of the Lord are scattered over this book with almost bewildering plentitude and variety. They are almost as thick as autumn leaves. The Orientalist takes great masses of rose leaves, and from them distils that precious essence we call otto of roses. Can any one take these scattered leaves of law, mass them together, and give us the essence of all law? Can any one take these almost unmanageable quantities, and return them to us in a small phial, which can be carried in the hand of a little child? Yes, Jesus Christ has done it. "All the law is fulfilled in one word—thou shalt love." Love is the essence of law; He who delights in love and loving shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water. Now we are permitted to look into "the mind of Christ," into love's great laboratory and see the great Lover at work. (Love is the only element in which He works, but it is prepared in different ways.) (At one time love is very tender, to woo a tender blade; again it is very fierce, to burn a stubborn weed.) (It reveals itself in different ways to suit men's different needs.) If, then, I would know how love should work I must study the mind of Christ, and meditate thereon both night and day. To delight in the law of the Lord is to live as devoted students in the mind of Christ. That mind is opened out for us in the gospel. All the dispositions of Jesus are laid bare. It is revealed to us how His love disposed itself in very varied circumstances and to very different needs. If we would be planted in a rich soil, and have a fruitful and luxuriant life, we must be rooted in the mind of Christ, delight ourselves in the mind of Christ. Now the mind of Christ cannot be known at a glance. It demands earnest and persistent study. We shall have to meditate in it day and night. The word "meditation" has an antique, old-world flavour about it, as though it belongs to an age when men took slow, measured strides, and the wheels of time moved leisurely. How many of us meditate, hold the mind before a subject until it becomes steeped in it, saturated with it, through and through? We live in an age of mental haste and gallop. Impressions are abundant; convictions are scarce. Go to the academy in any of the summer months, and see how the crowds gallop round the galleries, hastily glancing at the hundreds of pictures which adorn the walls, with the result that the memory retains nothing in distinction, but only a recollection of masses of colour in endless confusion. How is it with the art student? He goes early in the morning. He selects his picture. He sits down before it. He studies it—its perspective, its grouping, its colouring, the artist's mannerisms, every line, every light and shade. He meditates upon it. The picture becomes imprinted upon his mind and educates his taste. It steps into his own soul, and afterwards imperceptibly influences his own pencil and brush, and becomes part of the man for ever. Well, in the four Gospels we have four picture galleries, and the different pictures are different phases of the mind of Christ. Christ is depicted in different attitudes and conditions: alone on a mountain at prayer; in the midst of a vast inquisitive multitude; in the severities of temptation in a wilderness; in a quiet home at Bethany; facing the Cross; the triumph of Calvary. The real student, the real disciple of the Master, wants to know the mind of his Master, and he sits down before one picture at a time, and lingers before it, and studies every line and feature of it, and beauty after beauty breaks upon his delighted vision. He meditates upon it, and the beauty of the picture steps into his soul, refines his moral taste, influences his hand and heart, and becomes part of himself for ever. I tell you, we know almost nothing of the moral and spiritual loveliness of our Jesus, almost nothing of the mind of Christ, because we do not hold ourselves before it in lingering meditation. Why don't we? Why are we not devoted students of these pictures of the mind of Christ? Let us be frank with ourselves. Is not Bible-studying wearying and wearisome? To how many of us is it a delight? It is because so many put the virtue in the reading itself. We think when we have read a chapter we have discharged a duty. People open their Bibles, and read a few verses, and close them, and think that by their reading they have pleased God. You may have displeased Him! Some people think that when they read the Bible the very act of reading is a kind of talisman to hedge about their lives with increased security. Oh no, it may be that you are falling into the very snare of the tempter! John Ruskin says there is nothing which so tends to destroy the accuracy of the artistic eye as a hurried gallop round an art gallery, even though it contains the works of the most eminent masters. May not that be equally true of this gospel gallery, where the mind of the great Master is exhibited in a hundred different ways; a hurried and half-indifferent gallop may only destroy the accuracy of the moral eye, and impair rather than strengthen your spiritual vision? Bible reading is virtuous when it leads to virtue.

My text declares that those who thus live in continual meditation upon the ways of the Lord shall be in a rich roitage. They shall be like trees planted by rivers of water. They shall have vast resources. Are we all planted there? If we are rooted elsewhere our life will be stunted and unhealthy. "His leaf shall not wither." The leaf is the thing of the spring-time. It is the first thing that comes. Well, in the Christian life spring leaf shall ever remain. The spring greenness of life shall not wither as the years roll by. The beauties of the spring-time shall continue through all the seventy years. The beauties of early life, of young life, the beauties of childhood shall never be destroyed. "His leaf shall not wither." His childlikeness, the glory of the spring-time of life, shall always be fresh and beautiful; it shall never wither away. There shall be other developments. Life shall grow. It shall increase in knowledge. It shall broaden in experience. It shall open out large capacities and powers. But, amid all the developments, the beauties of childlikeness shall remain; his spring leaf shall not wither; the glory of the spring-time shall never be lost. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Meditation*:—Grace breeds delight in God, and delight breeds meditation. Meditation is like the watering of the seed, it makes the fruits of grace to flourish. If it be required to show what meditation is, I answer—1. It is the soul's retiring of itself. A Christian, when he goes to meditate, must lock himself up from the world. The world spoils meditation. 2. It is a serious and solemn thinking upon God (Heb.), with intentness to recollect and gather together the thoughts. Meditation is not a cursory work. A carnal, fitting Christian is like the traveller, his thoughts ride post, he minds nothing of God. A wise Christian is like the artist, he views with seriousness and ponders the things of religion. 3. It is the raising of the heart to holy affections. Meditation is a duty imposed. The same God who hath bid us believe hath bid us meditate. It is a duty opposed. We may conclude it is a good duty, because it is against the stream of corrupt nature. As it is said, "You may know that religion is right which Nero persecutes." The meditation of a thing hath more sweetness in it than the bare remembrance. The remembrance of a truth without the serious meditation of it will but create matter of sorrow another day. A sermon remembered, but not ruminated, will only serve to increase our condemnation. Meditation and study differ in three ways. In their nature—Study is the work of the brain, meditation of the heart. In their design—The design of study is notion, the design of meditation is piety. In their issue and result—Study leaves a man never a whit the better; it is like a winter sun that hath little warmth and influence. Meditation leaves one in a more holy frame. It melts the heart when it is frozen, and makes it drop into tears of love. There are things in the law of God which we should principally meditate upon. His attributes. His promises of remission, sanctification, remuneration. Meditate upon the love of Christ; upon sin; upon the vanity of the creature; upon the excellency of grace; upon the state of your souls; upon your experiences. The necessity of meditation will appear in three particulars. 1. The end why God has given us His Word, written and preached, is not only to know it, but that we should meditate in it. Without meditation we never can be good Christians. The truths of God will not stay with us. Meditation imprints and fastens a truth in the mind. Without meditation the truths which we know will never affect our hearts. And we make ourselves guilty of slighting God and His Word. If a man lets a thing lie by, and never minds it, it is a sign he slights it. Answers to objections—1. I have so much business in the world that I have no time to meditate. The business of a Christian is meditation, just as the business of the husbandman is ploughing and sowing. 2. This duty of meditation is hard. The price that God hath set heaven is labour. We do not argue so in other things. Entering into meditation may be hard, but once entered it is sweet and pleasant. As to rules about meditation—Be very serious about the work. Read before you meditate. Do not multiply the subjects of meditation. To meditation join examination. Shut up meditation with prayer, and pray over your meditations. Reduce it to practice. Live over your meditation. (*T. Watson.*) *A man known by his delight*:—And he seems to frame his process in this manner: a man is known what he is by his delight; for such as a man's delight is, such a man himself is; and therefore a godly man delights not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor to stand in the way of sinners, nor to sit in the chair of scornors, for these are all lawless delights—at least, delights of that law of which St. Paul saith, "I find another law in my members": they agree not with a godly man's nature, and though a delight there must be, there is not living without it; yet a godly man will rather want it than take

it up in such commodities. The godly man begins to appear in his likeness ; for this delighting in the law of God is so essential to godliness that it even constitutes a godly man and gives him his being. For what is godliness but the love of God ? and what is love without delight ? that we may see what a sovereign thing godliness is, which not only brings us delight when we come to blessedness, but brings us to blessedness by a way of delighting. For the Prophet requires not a godliness that bars us of delight ; he requires only a godliness that rectifies our delight ; for as the wrong placing our delight is the cause of all our miseries, so the right placing it is the cause of all our happiness ; and what righter placing it than to place it in the right ? and what is the right but only the law ? But is there delight, then, in the law of God ? Is it not a thing rather that will make us melancholy ? and doth it not mortify in us the life of all joy ? It mortifies indeed the life of carnal delights, but it quickens in us another delight, as much better than those as heaven is above the earth. For there is no true delight which delights not as much to be remembered as to be felt ; which pleaseth not as well the memory as the sense ; and takes not as much joy to think of it being done as when it was a-doing. For is it not a miserable delight when it may be threatened with this ? You will one day remember this with pain. Is it not a doleful delight, when grief besets the borders of gladness—when sorrow follows it at the heels ? Is it not a fearful delight when, like a magician's rod, it is instantly turned into a serpent ? (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *Delight in the Divine law* :—And as in this study of the law of God there is no fear of melancholy, so in the delight that is taken in it there is no fear of satiety ; all other delights must have change, or else they cloy us ; must have cessation, or else they tire us ; must have moderation, or else they waste us : this only delight is that of which we can never take enough—we can never be so full, but we shall leave with an appetite, or rather never leave, because ever in an appetite. It is but one, yet is still fresh ; it is always enjoyed, yet always desired ; or, rather, the more it is enjoyed, the more it is desired. All other delights may be barred from us, may be hindered to us ; this only delight is free in prison, is at ease in torments, is alive in death ; and indeed there is no delight that keeps us company in our death-beds, but only this. All other delights are then ashamed of us, and we of them ; this only sits by us in all extremities, and gives us a cordial when physic and friends forsake us. (*Ibid.*) *Delight in the law of God* :—Many delight in the law, because it teacheth many hidden and secret mysteries ; but these are vain men, and delight not in the law, but in superfluous knowledge. (*Ibid.*) *The law of God the chief joy of the believer* :—And how, then, shall we come to know the delighting which is true and perfect from that which is counterfeit and defective ? Shall we say, it must be a delighting only, or but only chiefly ? Not only, for so we should delight in nothing else ; and who doubts but there are many other delights which both Nature requires and God allows ? therefore, not only, but chiefly ; yet so chiefly as in a manner only ; for chiefly is properly where there may be comparison ; but this is so chiefly as admits of no comparison. In presence of this, all other delights do lose their light ; in balance with this, all other delights are found to be light. (*Ibid.*) *A constant delight in the Divine law* :—For as it is but a dead faith that brings not forth the fruit of good works, so it is but a feigned delight that brings not forth the work of exercising ; and as it is but an unsound faith that works but intermittingly and by fits, so it is but an aguish delighting that hath its heat but at turns and seasons ; but where we see a constancy of good works, as we may be bold to say there is a lively and sound faith, so where we see a continual exercising, we may be confident to say there is a true delighting. The working shows a life of faith ; the constancy of working, a true temper of that life. The exercising shows a delighting ; the continuance of exercising, a sincerity of that delighting. (*Ibid.*) *Doing the Divine law* :—Contemplation brings us but to, “I see and approve the better” ; and if “I pursue the worse” do follow, then godliness is stopped in her race at the very goal : the building is left unperfect when it is come to the roof. We cannot make a demonstration of true godliness out of all the premises, unless that be added which follows, “And in His law he will exercise himself day and night” ; but if this be added, then the roof of the house is set on, and then the goal of godliness is won. And though it may seem a wearisome thing, summer and winter, day and night, all a man's life long, to do nothing else but always one thing, yet this is the godly man's task ; he must do so, or he cannot be the man we take him for. For to be godly but sometimes is to be ungodly always ; and no man is so wicked but he may sometimes have good thoughts, and do good works. But this serves not



our godly man's turn ; his sun must never set, for if he ever be in darkness he shall ever be in darkness ; at least, he shall find it more work to kindle his fire anew than to have kept it still burning. Or if he should bestow the whole day in the exercise of godliness, and yet at night return to his vomit, that man would be but as a half-moon—bright on one side, and horrid blackness on the other. For godliness is a thing entire ; it cannot be had in pieces. (*Ibid.*) *Doing the law day and night* :—He will do it in the day, that men, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father which is in heaven ; and he will do it in the night, that he may not be seen of men, and that his left hand may not know what his right hand doeth. He will do it in the day, to show he is none of those who shun the light ; and he will do it in the night, to show that he is one of those who when in darkness shine. He will do it in the daytime, because the day is the time of doing, as St. Peter [the Lord] saith, "Work whilst it is day" ; and he will do it in the night, lest his Master should come as a thief in the night and find him idle. (*Ibid.*) *Meditation* :—A fragment of spar at first seems lustreless and unattractive, but as you turn it in your hand and let the light strike it at a certain angle it reveals beautiful radiance and even prismatic colours. A fragment of Scripture which is comparatively lifeless to a superficial reader becomes to the real student a marvel of beauty. He turns it round, views it at every angle till he sees the light of God break through it, and it shines with the sevenfold beauty of the Divine attributes. The true beauty of Scripture does not lie on the surface, or reveal itself to the careless eye. As we reflect one truth is obvious. The principal lesson of the Bible is Christ. He is the light and lustre of each part. Faith cannot look but some new beauty of the Lord appears. (*R. Venting.*) *Impressions fixed by meditation* :—(The photographer at the first has no security of the picture which he has taken. He cannot be said, in any true sense, to possess it. It is true, the impression is made upon the sensitive plate, but in its first condition, for all practical purposes, it is useless. The slightest exposure to the light would mar it hopelessly. It must be taken into the darkened room, and there, by being immersed in chemical solutions, it becomes fixed and assumes a permanent form. Just so is it with the thoughts which enter the mind. They are volatile and fugitive unless permanently fixed in the chambers of the mind by steadfast meditation.) (*Charles Deal.*)

Ver. 3. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters.—*The tree similitude* :—A beautiful illustration of the perpetual verdure and fruitfulness of the piety deriving its origin and sustenance from the Word of God. It is compared to a tree whose roots are refreshed by never-failing streams of living water, and whose every part is instinct with the life flowing from its roots. It is the same with the piety nourished by the Word of God. As the sap of the tree imparts life not only to its roots, and trunk, and larger branches, but also to the remotest twig and leaf, and to the very down upon the leaf, so the truly godly man's piety pervades his whole life, imparting its spirit and character and beauty to everything he does. He is not a religious man in one or two departments of life, but he is a religious man everywhere. His religion is a mental habit—a habit of thought, of feeling, of purpose, of action, of which he never for a moment divests himself. He aims that not so much as a leaf on his tree of righteous living shall show signs of decay. The same spirit that actuates him in the largest, actuates him also in the least transaction of his life. His religion is not a thing that is put on,—it is the man himself—the man in the man. Consequently the storm that bows mock trees of righteousness to the earth, leaves him still standing ; the drought that dries up their streams of life, leaves his still full, fresh, and flowing. Vigour, verdure, and fruitfulness are his evermore. His source of strength can never fail. It is the river of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, reaching his soul through the law of the Lord, wherein is his delight and unceasing meditation. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *Amongst the trees of the wood* :—The blessed man is like a tree planted by the rivers of waters. 1. Its blessedness does not depend upon its kind. It is not the cedar of Lebanon of which David is thinking, but any tree. It is not the tree, but the planting and the place, that constitute the blessedness. We need not think that we are the wrong sort. Two kinds of religious people in the world. There are those who always want to be somebody else : and there are those who want everybody else to be exactly what they themselves are. Now the woods need all the kinds of trees that God has made ; and the world wants all the kinds of people that God has sent into it. Some people are perhaps very different from what God made them, but He wants us to be every one after his kind. 2. We

can none of us afford to make much of ourselves, but we can all of us afford to be ourselves. I am not much at the best; but I am best when I am myself. Now, timid soul, the heavenly Father has room for you. 3. Notice that the tree is planted. It did not plant itself. It surrendered itself wholly and utterly to the husbandman. He took it in hand and dealt with it, and that was the beginning of its prosperity. This utter and whole-hearted surrender of ourselves to the Lord is the first sign of the blessed life. The husbandman must have possession before he can do any planting. Planted, the tree begins to put forth at the one end the roots that go out and clasp the rocks, and at the other end the branches spread and leaves unfold, and it drinks in the rain and sunshine of heaven. It is the fair emblem of the man of God, rooted in obedience, rising to communion. There is the man of God; the law of his God is an authority supreme, that knows no argument, no exception, no choice. I must and I will grip the law of God. Here is stability. You know where to have that man. Right is might with him. But a tree is not all root. Here, laughing in the sunshine, sporting in the breeze, dripping with the shower, is the branch that pushes out over earth and up into heaven. The emblem of freedom. But the branch is always in proportion to the root. The obedience and the communion keep pace. 4. It is a tree planted by the rivers of water. There is not only a rock to hold on to, but there is the river to refresh it. Rock and river, river and rock, this is what the law of God becomes. They who do not know think of the law of God as the hard stern voice of thunder, with its "Thou shalt." But they who do know cry, "Great peace have they that keep Thy law." It is rivers of waters, sweet, refreshing, quickening. So, rooted in obedience and stretching up into communion, the blessed man comes to be like a tree; there is stability, and steadfastness. He knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that that will hold though winds may blow and rains may beat. He bringeth forth his fruit in his season. He hath the real spirit for the hour; the very occasion seems to bring the grace he needs. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *The supremely happy man* :—We are here introduced to one who is said to be very happy. "Oh, the happinesses of the man" would be a literal translation of the Psalmist's words; and the expression is one indicating fulness of happiness—more than ordinary joy. It is also to be noted that the happiness of the man is the first thing to which the inspired writer refers, and that circumstance is indicative of the truth stated, that man's happiness is so great and so excellent that it must have the first place. The springs of joy from which he drinks are sweeter far than the sweetest of those from which others drink. The flowers in his garden have a loveliness and fragrance the flowers in other gardens never have. The paths of other men may seem brighter and smoother, but this is only in appearance. Every difficulty overcome is a victory won, and adds to his happiness. In what does this man's happiness consist? To know the various elements of his blessedness we must study the picture—carefully note its several distinctive points. I. OUR ATTENTION IS DIRECTED TO THE FACT THAT THE TREE IS ONE CAREFULLY "PLANTED." The word used by the Psalmist is not the ordinary term meaning to sow or plant, but the poetical and much rarer word. The same is found in *Psa. xcii. 13*—"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The trees planted within the temple enclosures would be planted with skill and care. This tree also is planted in a choice spot, and would therefore be planted well. It has sprung from no stray seed which the wind may have wafted hither, or some bird carried and dropped where grows the tree. And such is true of the man who is really happy and most happy. He is a tree "of the Lord's right hand planting." He is the offspring of wisdom that is perfect and care that is infinite. And this fact constitutes part of his joy. II. THE SITUATION OF THE TREE MUST HAVE OUR ATTENTION. The tree grows not on some barren waste, but "upon the rivers of water." By these rivers I understand the multitudinous and various overflowings of the Divine grace—the rivers of pardon, peace, comfort, teaching, sanctification, &c. 1. The plural term indicates also fulness as well as variety of blessing in constant circulation round about the roots of the Christian's life. 2. There is also in it the promise of continuance. If one stream dries up there are other streams to draw from. 3. Another thought is expressed, namely, freshness. "The rivers" are running streams. Here there is another element of the good man's happiness. He is felicitously situated. III. THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE TREE MUST NEXT BE CONSIDERED. As might be expected, the tree bears fruit. By this we are to understand the man's habit of doing good. The pronouns are to be noted. 1. It is not said he brings forth fruit, but "his fruit." Christian activity

takes many forms, and a man will do most good and do it best who is no servile imitator of another, but who works in his own groove, and in the way most natural to himself. And there is a beauty and gracefulness about work done after this manner that always adds to its value. The tree brings forth his own fruit, and the happy Christian does his own work. The Master gives to every one his work.

2. Again, the tree brings forth his fruit in his season. Seasonableness is itself a virtue. Work done opportunely is the only work done rightly. Here we touch a leading difficulty in some earnest lives. The question as to when this should be done, and when that, is the perplexing point. He is therefore a man led of God's Spirit, and this leading saves him from the painful perplexity of not knowing what he should first do and what next. By this means his work is simplified. His duties come to him in natural order—one at a time. God shows him not only what he must do, but how, and when. Here is another element of happiness. A fruitful life is a happy one.

IV. FROM LOOKING AT THE FRUIT OF THE TREE WE TURN TO ITS FOLIAGE. This is beautiful, and always so. "His leaf also shall not wither." Now if by the fruit we understand a man's works, by the "leaf" it will be natural to regard his words. What a man does and says constitutes his character. Works have a great importance, but so also have words. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." "His leaf shall not wither"—his words shall not die. "He being dead, yet speaketh." Another element of happiness in the good man. The words of his mouth shall be established, and their influence shall be felt for ever. The tongue is a little member, but how great is the happiness it may secure for the good man who uses it aright. And in making others happy one makes himself most happy. "And all that he does shall prosper." Here the works and words are interwoven. It is when the two do interweave and harmonise that there is prosperity. Note, it is not all he attempts or carries forward so far and there stops that shall prosper, but "all that he doeth." And this is happiness supreme—doing good—by work or word—crowned with prosperity. (*Adam Scott.*)

*Aspects of a godly life:*—Three aspects of godly character. I. ITS VARIETY. The figure leaves room for the development of varieties of goodness. True godliness does not reduce men to a dead level. The variety which God stamps upon nature He means to have reproduced in character. It is often supposed that, by becoming a servant of God, a man loses all his distinctiveness, sacrifices many of his peculiar modes of power, and shuts himself up to a comparatively narrow range of activity; whereas the truth is, that no man ever finds out the variety of uses to which the human talent and power can be put until he begins to work under God's direction.

II. ITS DIVINE CULTURE. The godly man is not like a tree that grows wild. He is like a tree planted, and that in a place which will best promote its growth. Godly character is developed under God's special supervision, and with God's own appliances. Has God no other means of revealing His will but through a burning bush or a stunning shock? His modes of revelation are as many as the characters and circumstances of men, and as varied; and He does not mean that His lowliest servant shall work under the shadow of a doubt, whether he is in his place or not. He may make circumstances, or conscientious judgment, or special dispensations His messengers, but whatever be the messenger, the message shall be clear to the open eye and the obedient spirit—"I have planted you." And if a man is working and growing where God sets him, he is always within reach of the means necessary for his growth and fruitfulness. He is always planted by rivers of water. Men find these channels in the most unlikely places, in the most unpromising parts of God's garden. In their very work they find something to engage their energy, quicken their enthusiasm, and develop their power. This is a mystery to men of the world. They look at the places in which some of God's servants are planted, and say it is impossible they should bear fruit there. Circumstances are all against them. There are no capabilities in the place. And yet, amid sickness, bereavement, scant opportunities, hatred, scorn, they not only live, but grow, and have something to spare for other lives; yea, minister to them most richly and effectively. What is more, they themselves are cheerful and strong, and grow in sweetness no less than in power.

III. ITS FRUITFULNESS. God's tree by God's river must be a fruitful tree. Note 1. It is "His fruit," not any other tree's fruit. God gives the tree its nature, and plants it where it can best develop its nature, and looks for fruit according to its nature and place. You are not to waste time in admiring or envying other men's modes of power, but to give your whole energy to the development of your own mode of power. And if your best is only a single fruit you can say, God planted me that



I might do that one thing. 2. The words "in his season." The seasons are different for different fruits. Some are early, some are late. Moral growths do not all fructify at the same time or rate. The latest fruit is usually the best. But, early or late, the fruit of godly character is seasonable. It will be found that God nourishes His men as He does the fruits of the earth, to meet the demands of special seasons; and that in each individual character Divine graces fructify as the occasion demands: courage for seasons of danger, patience for seasons of suffering, strength for seasons of trial, wisdom for seasons of difficulty; in short, the beautiful fitness of godliness is no less remarkable than its fruitfulness. "Shall prosper." This suggests the standard of prosperity. It must be measured by God's rule, not man's. I stood last summer in a magnificent hothouse, where the luscious clusters of grapes were all around and above, and the owner said, "When my new gardener came he said he would have nothing to do with these vines unless he could cut them clear down to the stock; and he did, and we had no grapes for two years: but this is the result." It did not look much like fruit when the stock stood bare, and the floor was heaped with cuttings; but the gardener looked over the two years, and saw what we were seeing and tasting. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*)

*A tree sermon to children:*—Six characteristics of trees. 1. Contentment. I never heard of a tree complaining. They are perfectly contented with their lot. Did you ever hear of a maple wishing it were an oak? They have not so much to make them contented as we have. The Christ-Spirit in us will make us happy and contented. 2. Health. How many of you have seen an unhealthy tree? The perfect boy or girl is the one who, like the tree, is healthy. We should attend to these bodies of ours. We should be careful to eat and drink those things which will give us sound bodies. We need to keep our minds, bodies, and souls healthy. 3. Roots. A great part of a tree is underground. Two reasons for this—to hold the tree in its place, and to nourish the tree. A perfect man, a perfect woman, boy, or girl is one who is well-rooted. Among the roots which hold us stable and keep us from falling are—(1) Good habits formed early in life; (2) good companions; (3) good books. 4. Importance. Trees are used in building, furniture, ships, and as medicine. Their fruit is important. The perfect man is important to society, to home, to national life. What should we do without the ideal man and woman? 5. Symmetry. The word means "perfectly balanced in all its parts." Some trees have perfect proportions. There are men who have only attended to physical development; others only to intellectual development. The symmetrical man is one who has attended to the development of the mind, body, and spirit. 6. Trial. A mighty oak is perfect, because it has been tried. Tempests have swept over it, but still it stands. The perfect man, woman, boy, or girl is the one who, when tempted and tried, comes off the victor. Tried, weighed, and not found wanting. Tried and found to be sound. (*Frank S. Rowland.*)

*A sermon on trees (to children):*—1. One of the most wonderful things about the trees is the way in which they breathe. Does it make you smile to think of a tree breathing? Do you say, "Well, I never thought of that before! I didn't know a tree could breathe." But they do, if it does surprise you, and they could no more live without breathing than could you or I. If it was not for the trees and other plants breathing the air would soon become filled with poisonous gas which would make every one sick, and soon cause us all to die. On the under side of every leaf of every tree, or shrub, or other plant there are thousands of little breathing holes or mouths. There are some also on the upper surface of the leaf. These are small openings through the outer skin of the leaf into the air chambers within, making a direct communication between the whole interior of the leaf and the air outside. You cannot see these little mouths with the naked eye. You have to use a microscope or magnifying glass, and then you can see them. The famous botanist, Professor Asa Gray, tells us that in the white lily, when they are unusually large, there are about sixty thousand of them to the square inch on the lower surface of the leaf, and about three thousand in the same space of the upper surface; and that in the apple tree, where they are under the average as to number, there are about twenty-four thousand to the square inch of the lower surface; so that each leaf has not far from one hundred thousand of these mouths. The trees are made by God to take out of the air a gas which would kill us all in a very little while if it were allowed to remain; and having taken it into their trunks they split it up into two parts, oxygen and carbon, and give us back the former that we may breathe it and live; while the latter they make into charcoal, which is used in a thousand ways for our comfort, convenience, and health. So kind is God in

making all things work together for good unto us whom He so dearly loves. 2. Another great use of the trees is, as we all know, to furnish food for man. Just think of all the things we get from them, and from other plants! Not only delicious oranges, and apples, and pears, and peaches, and all other nice fruits; but also starch, sugar, spices, oil, tea, coffee, flour, and grain. All these things are prepared by the plants out of the elements which they take in from the earth and air. They have been so made by God that they have the power to produce subtle chemical changes in these unpalatable materials, which they thus transform into delicious food for man. Says the same botanist above quoted, "Animals depend absolutely upon vegetables for their being." The great object for which the all-wise Creator established the vegetable kingdom evidently is, that the plant might stand on the surface of the earth, between the animal and mineral creations, and organise portions of the former for the sustenance of the latter. We must indeed see the goodness and the love of God in the goodly fruits of the trees. 3. Another very interesting branch of our subject is in regard to the habits or instincts of the trees. Wherever a tree may be growing, if there is a stream or pool of water anywhere near it, or a damp piece of ground, it will always push its roots eagerly toward that. It wants the hydrogen and oxygen which the water can furnish, and it will have them if it can possibly get them. In other words, it is thirsty, just as we are thirsty, and it eagerly seeks for water to drink. For example, I have read (Horace Bushnell's lecture on *Life*) of a man named Madison, who had an aqueduct—that is, a sort of trough made of logs—which in reaching his house passed by a tree which was especially fond of water, at a considerable distance from it. Opposite to where the tree stood there was an auger hole in the log that had been filled with a plug of soft wood. Exactly to that spot the tree sent off a long stretch of roots, which forced their way through this soft wood plug, choking up the passage; "and there," says the account, "they were found drinking, like so many thirsty animals." The same writer who tells this incident, says "that a strawberry planted in sand, with good earth a little way off, will turn its runners all toward that. But if the good earth is too far away to be reached, it will make no effort on that side more than on the others." You can try this experiment if you want to, and see if it is not so. 4. Then it is wonderful to see a tree exerting its mighty strength. For in every tree in your garden at home, and in every one that you can see from these windows, and in all the trees of the forests and on the hills, there is a life-principle, the strength of which is as great as, or greater than, that of the largest steam-engine you ever saw. Why, in the commonest garden vegetable there is a force capable of lifting an enormous weight. And if you go down here on the road a little way, some time, you can see a huge rock that has been broken right in two by the strength of a little tree not much larger round than my arm. Some time, years ago, a little cone lodged in the crevice of that rock, and pretty soon the rains and the warm sun caused one of the little seeds in the cone to germinate and grow. A little root ran out and down into the crevice, and began growing. Soon it had got as large as the crevice, and touched the hard rock on each side. And no doubt the grim old rock would have laughed, if rocks could laugh, and would have said to the tiny little pine tree, "You insignificant little sprout, you can't grow here, for I won't let you, so you may as well not try." But the little tree kept growing, and pretty soon began to press hard on the sides of the crevice; harder and harder it pushed, and twisted round to get a good hold, filling up the whole space with its insinuating roots. And the rock hung together, and braced itself, and tried its best not to give way. But at last one dark night CRACK it went, and broke in two right in the middle. And all because of the little tree, which it had thought so weak and small. A tree has in it this wonderful power of growth and enlargement. It is always growing, running up taller and taller, and getting larger and larger every year. And if it is broken by storms or felled to the ground it often reconstructs its building, and rears itself again with all its wonderful ducts, and tissues, and breathing-pores, like to the pattern which it bore before. And all the trees, so many kinds of which we can see around us in the forests, though they have different forms and characteristics, and are put to different uses, still contribute, each its share, to fulfilling the plans and perfecting the work which God gave them to do upon the earth. There is no confusion. Each has its law within itself, and fills the sphere which God intended it to fill. (*F. H. Palmer.*) *The fruit tree and the chaff*:—The 1st Psalm strikes the keynote of those statutes of God which are the songs of His people in their pilgrimage. Like an illuminated initial letter, it presents a graphic picture of the contrast between the blessedness of the righteous



and the misery of the wicked under the emblems of a fruit tree flourishing beside a river and of a handful of chaff winnowed by the wind. Let us look at the picture presented. I. THE FRUIT TREE. This suggests—1. Stability. It is firmly rooted in the soil. Thus it tells of the stability of the righteous. 2. Access to a perennial mine of nourishment and refreshment: “by the rivers of waters.” A river in the East is an artery of life. A tree, therefore, with its head in the torrid sunshine, and its feet laved by a perpetual stream flowing down from some far-up snowy mountain, is one of the most beautiful images of a righteous man. 3. It yields its fruit in its season. Fruit is that part of the tree which belongs not to the individual, but to the race. In the fruit the tree sacrifices its own life for the life that is to spring from it; converts branch and foliage that would have remained and ministered to its own beauty, into blossom and fruit that fall off and minister to the good of others. In no case does the fruit benefit the tree, but, on the contrary, burdens and exhausts it, as is clearly proved by the shorter lives of fruit than of other trees. So the distinguishing peculiarity of the righteous is self-sacrifice. They have truly learned that first lesson of the Cross of Christ. They, as He, come not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give their life for others. 4. Its leaf shall not wither. This is a remarkable feature. It is the old idea of the bush burning and not consumed. In nature it is only through the fading of the leaf that the fruit ripens. The yellowing autumnal foliage accompanies the development of the fruit. By the leaf the tree breathes and forms its wood from air and sunshine. It is its strength, yea is itself; for the whole tree is simply a modification and development of the leaf, as it is most certainly the creation of the leaf. The leaf, therefore, represents the righteous man's life. Not only does he do good to others, but he gets good to himself. Godliness is to a man's nature what sunlight is to a plant. It imparts living greenness and fadeless vigour. II. THE CHAFF. This is a complete contrast. 1. Chaff is a dead leaf that was once green and flourishing and full of sap and life. It once performed an important part in the growth of the plant. But now it is effete and has no vital connection with the plant. How worthless does a human being become who has lost his true life by sin. 2. It is driven away. It has fallen from the higher powers of the organic world and it comes under the power of the inorganic. And so with the ungodly man. That which separated him from the mass of creation—the Divine image—he has lost. But losing this he becomes a mere part of the creation, instead of having personal relations with the personal God. The ungodly have no individuality; they live, move, and act in the mass. The statistics of wrong-doing illustrate this. You can calculate the average of crimes; the number of paupers, suicides, and criminals there will be. The evil passions of men may be known as we know the coming of an eclipse. And thus the awful lesson is read to us that individuals when they have sold themselves to sin and so lose the spiritual life that bound them to God come to be controlled, notwithstanding all their waywardness, by laws which apply to mere things in which there is no power to resist. They pass beyond the sphere of the grace of God into the passive realms of matter. 3. All things become hostile to it. What ministers life to the living tree ministers more rapid decay to the chaff. Which are we? (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *A tree by the river*:—It is deeply interesting, in counting the circles of a section of some old tree, to note the variations, some circles being almost imperceptible for narrowness, and some so broad that you fear almost to have counted two as one. As you count the outer circles, your memory, reaching back to those years, can show a cause for this difference. The years of drought are the years of little growth. For the tree, as for our spirits, it holds true that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. There are surely seasons when one can make little increase save under exceptional circumstances, such as those of a tree by the river side, which shows little variation. It drew supplies from an abiding source. Precisely this sweet secret it is that finds expression in the 1st Psalm, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.” They who live near the Lord, who delight themselves in His law and meditate on it day and night, are ever growing and fruitful. (*Sarah Smiley.*) *The oleander*:—There is one tree, only to be found in the valley of the Jordan, but too beautiful to be entirely passed over; the oleander, with its bright blossoms and dark green leaves, giving the aspect of a rich garden to any spot where it grows. It is rarely, if ever, alluded to in the Scriptures. But it may be the tree planted by the streams of water which bringeth forth his fruit in due season, and “whose leaf shall not wither.” (*A. P. Stanley, D.D.*) *A believer like a tree*:—Dr. John Paton, speaking of Namakei, his first convert on the island of Aniwa, says, “He went in and out

the meeting with intense joy. When he heard of the prosperity of the Lord's work, and how island after island was learning to sing the praise of Jesus, his heart glowed, and he said, 'Missi, I am lifting up my head like a tree; I am growing tall with joy.' *Constancy in religion*.—I have read of a waterfall in a nobleman's garden, beautiful in its construction, but the water was never turned on unless his lordship was there. That is like much of the religion existing in the present age. It is only turned on when there is some one to see and applaud. Our service must not be kept for mere effect and display. (*R. Venting*.) *That bringeth forth his fruit in his season*.—*Christian development*.—This reference to the tree as the image of the good man's life, this garden which is thus summoned up before our minds, harmonises with almost all the early, and certainly with the closing, scenes in our Bibles. It is significant that the image which is chosen is not a tree of the forest, but a tree specifically planted by the water side. The image of the tree of nature—of the tree in its wild untended state—has been freely used by a school of thinkers as against any doctrine of human education whatever. But vegetable life may, under certain circumstances, gain very considerably by cultivation. Cultivation develops latent properties, latent powers. It prevents a waste of life, it economises time in growth. Man is not a tree, but he is like a tree. He has qualities and characteristics peculiar to himself. He has intelligence, and no doctrine of human improvement would be complete which did not provide for the development of his understanding. He is morally free, he is social; in these things there must be development. He is depraved, and if a man is left to himself he will grow in his depravity. Therefore man must be checked, reprov'd, chastised. There are points of similarity between human nature and vegetable growth.

**I. EACH IS GRADUAL.** The growth of the spiritual life is in the nature of the case slow, because it consists chiefly in the formation of habits of faith, hope, love, prayer, inward conformity of the soul to the will of Almighty God.

**II. EACH IS MYSTERIOUS.** We cannot understand the mysterious processes which pass within the soul; we can only see the outer life, the words and the actions, which are the products of the feelings engendered by grace. As a tree requires soil, sunlight, moisture, and space for its proper growth, so the human soul requires certain ascertainable conditions, without which growth and development are impossible. I will mention three.

**1.** The life of the soul should be based upon principles. They are the soil of the soul. Sentiments, opinions, and views belong to quite a different strata of mental life from the possession of principles. Principles—what are they? They are the basis of truth on which the understanding must lean if man is to rise to the destined tether of his greatness. The understanding is the basis faculty of the character, but the understanding itself must rest on something. And what is it to rest on if not on sound principles? This is true in science, in art, in speculation, and in religion. Some principles are natural. Seeing the difference between right and wrong; recognising the eternal law of justice and righteousness, these are natural principles. Some belong to grace, they are revealed, such as that Jesus is God equal to the Father, and that Jesus is our Judge. Sooner or later a principle brings forth its fruit in due season. But you may have long to wait for it.

**III. CHRISTIANITY MUST EXPAND.** It must expand by love. The heart is the centre of life. The heart may be corrupted through being fixed on false objects, or it may be closeted up. Either of them is a misfortune so great that we can scarcely think less of it than that it is very ruining to character. Ascertain the object on which the heart is fixed and you have ascertained the direction in which moral and spiritual life is moving. One condition of the development of the soul is the discipline of the will. The will is the summit of the character, just as the heart is at its centre, just as the understanding is at its base. (*Canon Liddon, D.D.*) *Fruit in his season*.—Solomon uttered an axiom when he said, "To everything there is a season." The truth is applicable to all God does. As in creation its mode and time were not anyhow but appointed. And what is true on the larger scale is also true on the smaller. And to every individual. Your birth and death are appointed by God. To you there is a season.

**I. THERE IS FRUIT APPROPRIATE TO EACH SEASON.** This not only in the physical world but in the moral.

**1.** Childhood has its fruits. Like the holy child Jesus you are to bear fruit by loving, trusting, and imitating Him. In your baptism you have been given to Christ and are His. He expects you to bear fruit.

**2.** Youth has its fruit. St. John speaks of "little children, young men, fathers." You occupy the middle position. "I have written to you," says the apostle. Young men and maidens, be sober minded and strong minded too.

**3.** Old age has its fruits.

When the spring is gone, the summer vanished, how varied and multiplied the fruit of autumn. And there are fruits not only of season, but 4. Of time. Our Sabbaths, for example, and working days and days of relaxation also should have their fruit. And there are—5. Moral seasons. Conviction—how important this is. It is a solemn season when God comes near the soul. And the time of spiritual quickening when the soul longs for more of God. Seasons of sorrow, of joy, and of temptation, these all have their appropriate fruit. II. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THE FRUIT APPROPRIATE SHOULD BE BORNE IN ITS SEASON. For then it is best. 1. Your lifetime—if it bear not its fruit it will never bear it at all. How are you spending it? 2. Religious impression—if that pass away, “a more convenient season” you will never have. III. FOR THIS SUITABLE MEANS MUST BE EMPLOYED. It is the result of previously fulfilled conditions. 1. Separation from the ungodly is one of them. 2. Meditation on God’s Word. 3. Hidden supplies of God’s grace, like the water at the roots of the tree. They flow along the channels of Divine ordinances, prayers, worship, sacraments. So will you bear fruit. (*Josiah Viney.*) *The timeliness of fruitage*:—A very practical lesson arises from these words. We are not to look even in Christian life for what is ordinarily understood by “fruit” all the year round. Upon this point many Christians disquiet themselves unnecessarily. There is a time for rest, for recruit, and time spent in legitimate sleep is time made for larger and harder work. Let the tree be the symbol and image of our life. It has its season of fruitfulness, but not of fruitlessness in any blameworthy sense. The tree is part of the great course of things—a speck in an infinite system, and it keeps all the time and law of the stupendous universe. So it is with the Christian heart. There are times of abundant labour, of almost excessive joy, of hope above the brightness of the sun, and of realisations which transform the earth into heaven. There are times when our energy seems to be more than equal to all the exigencies of life; we can work without weariness, we can suffer without complaining; we are quite sure that the morning draweth nigh, and that in the end the victory will be with God. At other times there are seasons of depression, almost intolerable weariness, somewhat indeed of sickness of heart, as if a great pain had fixed itself within us; at other times we know that we are not bringing forth fruit to the glory of God or for the use of man, and in such times we call ourselves cumberers of the ground, and urge our idleness against ourselves with all the force of a criminal accusation. The Christian should deal with himself reasonably in all these things. The year is not one season, nor is human life one monotonous experience. We are not to be judged by this or that one day or season, but by the whole scope and circumference of life. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*—*The influence of religion upon prosperity*:—1. Piety and gratitude to God contribute in a high degree to enliven prosperity. Gratitude is a pleasing emotion. The sense of being distinguished by the kindness of another gladdens the heart, warms it with reciprocal affection, and gives to any possession, which is agreeable in itself, a double relish, from its being the gift of a friend. Not only gratitude for the past, but a cheering sense of God’s favour at the present, enter into the pious emotion. 2. Religion affords to good men peculiar security in the enjoyment of their prosperity. By worldly assistance it is vain to think of providing any effectual defence, seeing the world’s mutability is the very cause of our terror. 3. Religion forms good men to the most proper temper for the enjoyment of prosperity. A little reflection may satisfy us that mere possession, even granting it to be secure, does not constitute enjoyment. We all know the effects which any indisposition of the body, even though slight, produces on external prosperity. The corrupted temper and the guilty passions of the bad frustrate the effect of every advantage which the world confers on them. None but the temperate, the regular, and the virtuous know how to enjoy prosperity. Prosperity is redoubled to a good man by his generous use of it. It is reflected back upon him from every one whom he makes happy. 4. Religion heightens the prosperity of good men by the prospect which it affords them of greater happiness to come in another world. What is present is never sufficient to give us full satisfaction. To the present we must always join some agreeable anticipations of futurity in order to complete our pleasure. Let this be our conclusion, that, both in prosperity and in adversity, religion is the safest guide of human life. Conducted by its light, we reap the pleasures and, at the same time, escape the dangers of a prosperous state. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *The song of the prosperous life*:—I. THE PROSPEROUS LIFE IS A LIFE MADE PROSPEROUS BY REFUSAL. 1. The man will refuse to think wrongly. Counsel—that is, the thought or creed of the ungodly.



Non-use of thought in certain directions results in inability of thought toward those directions. Mr. Darwin confessed himself "atrophied" toward music, painting, poetry, &c., through the so constant using of himself in ways simply scientific. This atrophy of thought is just as possible in religious directions. A man who "will not" take counsel toward God "cannot" at last. The man of the really prosperous life will not walk in such counsel of the ungodly; he will think toward God. 2. He will refuse to practise wrongly, "way of sinners." At the battle of Alma, in the Crimean War, one of the ensigns stood his ground when the regiment retreated. The captain shouted to him to bring back the colours; but the ensign replied, "Bring the men up to the colours." So this man of the prosperous life will maintain high and brave practice of the right, whoever may retreat from it. 3. Will refuse to speak wrongly, "seat of the scornful." Into their sort of speech he will not enter. II. BY RECEPTION. 1. He will receive all ennobling and uplifting objects of affection; but his delight is in the "law of the Lord." The controlling thing in a man is his topmost love. 2. This man loves to think of what he loves. "Meditate day and night." "Hang this upon the wall of your room," said a wise picture-dealer to an Oxford under-graduate, as he handed him the engraving of a Madonna of Raphael, "and then all the pictures of jockeys and ballet girls will disappear." III. RESULTS. Noble growth. Propitious placing. Sustenance. Fruitfulness. Beauty of character. Real prosperity. (*Wayland Hoyt, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.**—*The chaff driven away*:—Who are the ungodly? Are they open and wilful sinners? Certainly these are included, but not mainly intended. Are they the atheists, scoffers, and those who make a ribald jest of all sacred things? Yes, but not they alone. For the godly man is he who has a constant eye to God, recognises Him in all things, trusts Him, loves and serves Him. The ungodly man is he who lives in the world as if there were no God; he may be religious, but that is not enough. He attends to outward forms, but the heart of them he does not perceive. How many there are in all our congregations, therefore, who are ungodly. They do not love the Lord, or delight in communion with Him, or desire to be like Him. They are ungodly. Now concerning all such, the text utters—I. A FEARFUL NEGATIVE. "The ungodly are not so." For 1. They are not "like a tree planted." The Christian is so. The tree planted is visited and in every way cared for by the husbandman. But the wild tree in the forest, the tree self-sown upon the plain, no one owns, no one watches over it. 2. Not like a tree planted by the rivers of waters. The believer is. He is planted not by banks which may soon dry up, far less in a desert; but by the rivers of waters. And is it not so? We know what it is to drink of the rivers of Christ's fulness. But "not so the ungodly." Days of drought will come for them. 3. Does not bring forth his fruit in his season. The righteous does so. If the ungodly have here and there a shrivelled grape it is brought forth in the wrong season. Many think that so long as they don't do wrong it is as if they did right. But mere negative goodness will not suffice. The curse on Meroz was for not coming to the help of the Lord. They did not oppress, only did not help. 4. His leaf also shall not wither. Not so the ungodly. And 5. Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Yes, though the righteous may suffer much earthly loss. They have an inward prosperity even when the outward one is wanting. No so the ungodly. Is he really happy now? To him there is nothing good in this life. That which looketh fair is but as the paint upon the harlot's face. II. A TERRIBLE COMPARISON. "Like the chaff"—so useless, so light and unstable, so worthless. III. AN AWFUL PROPHECY. How near the chaff is to the grain. As yon godless parent of a Christian child. As yon helpers in various forms of Christian work; sitting side by side with the godly. Close to the grain, and yet only chaff. And to be driven away—Where, where? Jesus Christ has said, "He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Who here is prepared to make his bed in hell? I beseech you by the living God, tremble and repent. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gate to the threshing-floor*:—"Not so!" The Psalmist does not dwell upon the details of their ungodliness. As in the case of the righteous, he confines himself to indicating the sources of their life. The great object of this Psalm is to show us the "fountain heads" of moral character. The character that is "not so" is set forth by a figure. We leave now the garden gate, and not far off behold a raised platform of earth beaten hard. It is the threshing-floor. Here stand the workmen with their earthen vessels, and scooping up the threshed grain, mingled with chaff, throw it up into the air

or let it fall in a stream from the uplifted jar ; and the wind, with its whirling gusts, which arise so suddenly on the plains, catches the chaff and drives it away before it. "The ungodly are like the chaff"—light, shifting, worthless. Here are three aspects of the ungodly character—its instability ; its worthlessness ; its insecurity. One of the happiest phases of goodness is its fixedness. A life rooted in God, based on settled conviction, has a single aim, a uniform tendency, and a permanent result. In these particulars the opposite character fails. Take a life away from God, and you take from it unity of impulse. Passion, pride, selfishness drive it hither and thither as the winds drive the dismantled ship. Nowhere but in God does man find a consistent law. The second phase of this character is its worthlessness. The wind drives it away, and the husbandman is glad to have it driven away. Here we find ourselves in the track of gospel thought. An ungodly life is not used under God's direction and for God's uses. The present age is very susceptible to this fallacy—the identification of activity with usefulness. But we ask, under whose direction ? For what ? For whom ? We call that man useful who works on God's lines, in God's ways, and for God's ends. It is the unchanging law of God, that the life which gives nothing has no place in His Divine order. The chaff, which only lives by the grain, which feeds no one, which has no power of reproduction, is driven away. The third phase of this character is its insecurity. The contrast is between the fixed tree and the shifting chaff. How safe is the man who abides in God, while he who puts himself outside of the restraints of Divine law forfeits likewise its protection. The weakness and instability of the character which is not founded in God's law shall finally be made manifest. The whole current of the Psalms moves in the direction of a day of final tests which shall lay bare the foundations of character. It is only in romances that virtue always triumphs and vice always goes under. But our Psalm does not leave us here. It carries us over this time of the growing together of wheat and tares, to the time of separation. There is coming a day of judgment, whose searching tests shall resolve the confusion, and make clearly manifest to the world what is weak and what is strong ; what is solid and what is superficial ; what is wheat and what is chaff. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The chaff in the wind* :—My heart aches when I begin a sermon on a theme like this. But what makes my heart ache is that a man or a woman born so high should sink so low. That one who had the possibility of being the good grain in God's field, that might have been useful and happy, should have so resisted the gracious influence of God's husbandry as at last to have become of no value, and only to be compared to the chaff which the wind driveth away. Importance hinges on the word "ungodly." Who are the ungodly ? I do not understand that it means, necessarily, that a man is out-breakingly and viciously wicked. The ungodly man or woman is simply a person who does not live in the way that God demands ; one whose thoughts and purposes and conduct are not in harmony with God's laws ; who does not please God. What a graphic suggestion is here of the vanity of a sinful life ! The man who loves and serves God is building up a character which is abiding like a great tree. He is gathering many treasures of character and personality that can never be taken from him. Truth, and integrity, and love, and faith, and hope, and patience, and gentleness, these great spiritual qualities in which God develops the Christian, are qualities that cannot be taken away from us by any disaster that can come. Money, and honour, and friends, and health, and life itself may go, and all these qualities remain in their full measure ; but a sinful life, a life that resists God's grace, has nothing left that is substantial. If a man gives himself up to worldliness he may be ever so successful in his ambitions, but there is nothing about it that will last. A rich man goes out of the world as poor as when he came into it. His wealth fails, and is like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Physical strength is fragile in the same way ; often a man rejoices in his strength one week and the next he is in his grave. But if he lives to be an old man, with trembling hands and tottering footsteps, his physical strength fails him at last and is like the chaff in the wind. The same is true of physical beauty and all the attractiveness of physical life. Many people who do not obey God are nevertheless very ambitious to make themselves of some account in the world ; but one's work must be like the chaff if it is not in harmony with God. God could not be the good God that you dream of if He did not make a difference between chaff and wheat. It is not that God is not good, but that the ungodly man has failed to avail himself of God's goodness, has sinned against God's goodness and mercy, and has brought ruin upon himself. You say that the chaff

cannot help being chaff; yes, but the man can. You will not be chaff unless you choose to be chaff. God did not make you to be chaff; He made you in His own likeness and image, and when you had wandered from Him by wicked ways Jesus Christ wrought out your salvation on the Cross. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*)

*The fruitless life*:—The second half of the Psalm gives the dark contrast of the fruitless, rootless life. The Hebrew flashes the whole dread antithesis on the view at once by its first word, "Not so," a universal negative which reverses every part of the preceding picture. The remainder of the Psalm has three thoughts—the real nullity of such lives, their consequent disappearance in "the judgment," and the ground of both the blessedness of the one type of character and the vanishing of the other in the diverse attitude of God to each. Nothing could more vividly suggest the essential nothingness of the "wicked" than the contrast of the leafy beauty of the fruit-laden tree, and the chaff, rootless, fruitless, lifeless, light, and therefore the sport of every puff of wind that blows across the elevated and open threshing-floor. Such is indeed a true picture of every life not rooted in God and drawing fertility from Him. It is rootless, for what holdfast is there but in Him? or where shall the heart twine its tendrils if not round God's stable throne? or what basis do fleeting objects supply for him who builds elsewhere than on the enduring Rock? Chaff is fruitless because lifeless. Its disappearance in the winnowing wind is the consequence and manifestation of its essential nullity. Just as the winnower throws up his shovelful into the breeze, and the chaff goes fluttering out of the floor because it is light, while the wheat falls on the heap because it is solid, so the wind of judgment will one day blow, and deal with each man according to his own nature. It will separate them, whirling away the one and not the other. The ground of these diverse fates is the different attitude of God to each life. Each clause of the last verse really involves two ideas, but the pregnant brevity of style states only half of the antithesis in each, suppressing the second member in the first clause, and the first member in the second clause, and so making the contrast the more striking by emphasising the cause of an unspoken consequence in the former, and the opposite consequence of an unspoken cause in the latter. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" (therefore it shall last). The Lord knoweth not the way of the wicked (therefore it shall perish). The way or course of life which God does not know perishes. A path perishes when, like some dim forest track, it dies out, leaving the traveller bewildered amid impenetrable forests; or when, like some treacherous Alpine track among rotten rocks, it crumbles beneath the tread. Every course of life but that of the man who delights in and keeps the law of the Lord comes to a fatal end, and leads to the brink of a precipice over which the impetus of descent carries the reluctant foot. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*The wicked compared to chaff*:—Natural chaff is light and unprofitable. It is light, containing in it no solid or weighty matter, but a very slight and frothy substance, subject to many alterations; even so the wicked are not solid in their purposes and enterprises, and weighty in their carriage and courses, but as chaff, light, easily tossed and blown away. They are light in their words and light in their minds. They are unprofitable in two ways. In matters temporal, concerning this life, wherein, though they have ability, they want the will to do good with the same. In matters spiritual, wherein, though they have a will, yet they want ability. In that the Spirit of God compares all wicked men to chaff, we learn that the estate and condition of wicked men is exceedingly inconstant, void, uncertain, mutable, and changeable. They have no certain stay, no sure and settled estate in this world. Whether we consider the matters of religion and God's worship, or the things of the world, we shall see them like unto chaff—vain, vile, uncertain, mutable. (*Samuel Smith.*)

*The ungodly described*:—Where, first, we may observe that the prophet observes here a different course in handling of this proposition from that he held in handling the former; for there he only described a godly man, but named him not; here, he only names the wicked, but describes them not; and, indeed, it needed not, for *Rectum est index sui et obliqui* [Justice defines both the just and the unjust]; by telling what a godly man is he tells, by virtue of the law of contraries, what the wicked are, for if that be affirmed of a wicked man which was denied of a godly, and that denied which was affirmed, the description is made ready to your hand, and you have him deciphered in his fulness. And yet we may take notice of a further reason, for godliness is subject to many falsifications; it may suffer much alloy by mixture of base metals, and there is need of a touchstone to try whether it be right or no. Many colours may be laid upon wickedness, to make it seem godliness, as Satan can



transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14); and then there is need of marks to know whether it be a good angel, whether it be true godliness or no; but in the case of wickedness it is not so; there is no need of any such marks, for there cannot a worse vizard be put upon wickedness than its own face, there is no baser metal to be mingled with it; and though a wicked man will be counterfeiting to be godly, yet it was never known that a godly man would counterfeit to be wicked; and therefore the prophet, who is no waster of words in vain, would not give marks where they needed none, but left wickedness to be known by its own ill face, which is seen plainly enough by the law of contraries. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *The wicked as chaff*:—But may we not make a stand here, and question the prophet about his similitude? for look upon the wicked, do they look like chaff? One would think them rather, in all appearance, to be clean wheat, and the best wheat too, for they only are flourishing—they only carry the price in all markets. But the prophet speaks not how they look, but what they are; he saith not, They look like chaff, but, They are like chaff; and before he hath done, for all their appearance, he will make it appear they are like chaff, and chaff they are like to have for their similitude. Well, be it so: let the prophet have his will, and let them be like chaff; what hurt take they by this? for doth not the chaff grow up, and is it not brought up with the wheat? and when harvest comes, are they not both reaped together, and both together laid up in the barn? and what more misery in all this to the chaff than to the wheat itself? All this is true; the prophet sees it well enough, and therefore stays not here neither; he ends not with saying, They are like to chaff, but, They are like to chaff *which the wind scatters*. For this is that which perfects the similitude; and now let any man except against it if he can. (*Ibid.*) *The wicked as chaff*:—And such is the condition of the wicked; a gale of prosperity hoisted them up, that they neither know themselves, nor where they are; a blast of adversity blows them down, and makes them tear the heavens with murmuring, and themselves with impatience. No state, no time, no place contents them. (*Ibid.*) *The wind within*:—The chaff hath the wind without it that disquiets it, but a wicked man hath the wind within him (his own passions) that disquiets him. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 5. **The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.**—*The day of judgment*:—1. None will deny that the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, explicitly condemns the sinner, and consigns him to the second death. By the law can no man be justified. It contains no provision for pardon. 2. He will not be able to stand in the last trial, because all the witnesses will be against him. His companions in sin will testify against him. The example of the righteous will testify against the impenitent. The sinner's own awakened conscience and memory will testify against him. So will the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. The eternal Judge will be inflexibly strict in interpreting and upholding the law. And 4. The impenitent sinner at God's bar will have no advocate. (*A. Dickinson.*) *The ungodly rising to judgment*:—They shall not rise in the judgment, this is more than St. Paul would have said himself if he had been in the prophet's place, for who ever thought the ungodly should rise in the judgment, who are sure to fall in the judgment, seeing their judgment shall be to condemnation and not to deliverance? To rise to the judgment is to be brought to public trial, and this is the general resurrection that we believe; but to rise in the judgment is upon trial to come off with credit, and, by the sentence of the Judge, not only to be justified, but advanced. And who ever believed this rising to belong to the wicked? (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *A congregation in which sinners cannot stand*:—And as there shall be a general judgment, in which the ungodly shall not rise, so, after the judgment, there shall be a particular congregation of the righteous, in which sinners shall not stand. And, indeed, what society can there be between a tree and chaff? or who can think it fit that trees and chaff should be made companions? And as there is no reason that the ungodly, having made others by their counsel to fall here, should rise themselves in judgment hereafter, so there is no reason, seeing the righteous could not be suffered to stand here in the way of sinners, that sinners should be suffered to stand hereafter in the congregation of the righteous. And here now a multitude of reasons seem assembled, as it were, to make it good, that sinners neither can nor ought to stand in this assembly. It is a congregation which none can make but the righteous: for sinners are all rebels, and would make it a rout. It is a court where all must be neat and clean; and so are none but the righteous; for sinners are all lepers, and would make it a spital. It is a company

that makes a communion, and that can none do but saints, for sinners seek every one their own, and are all for themselves. They must be all God's friends; at least, such as He knows; and such are only the righteous, for sinners are all mere strangers and aliens from God. (*Ibid.*) *Failure in judgment*:—And now let the great men of the world please themselves, and think it a happiness that they can rise in honours, can rise in riches and estimation in the world; yet, alas! what is all this, if they fail of rising in the judgment to come? (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. **The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.**—*The way of the righteous*:—I. CONTRASTED PICTURES OF LIFE.—1. That of the happy man illustrated by the law of attraction and repulsion. See the sentiments, habits, and disposition (i) of the evil he is led to repel (ver. 1); (ii) of the good to which he is attracted (ver. 2). Delighting and meditating upon God's Word. 2. By the law of vegetable life (ver. 3). The happy life of the good, like a fruit tree, is (i) one of ceaseless appropriation and transformation, (ii) of seasonable fruit-bearing, (iii) of prosperity under all circumstances. 3. With all this the life of the ungodly is contrasted (vers. 4-6): (i) As shown in the reason of the contrast. The character of the ungodly is self-evolved from their own nature. That of the good, from God. (ii) In the result of the contrast. The ungodly having no solidity, nothing substantial in themselves, are compared to "chaff," which is light and empty and easily carried away. And having no foundation, they cannot "stand in the judgment." And having nothing to support them, must perish while the good shall prosper evermore. II. LESSONS FROM THESE CONTRASTED PICTURES.—1. That true happiness is not the result of chance, but of law—fundamental, immutable, Divine. This law may be thus stated: Every effect must have an adequate cause. An uprooted tree cannot bear fruit; so a soul whose faith and love are torn away from God cannot be happy or prosperous. The specific law of spiritual good is this: Character determines destiny. 2. That God has so graciously arranged the conditions of happiness or misery that it is dependent upon each one's personal choice. (*D. C. Hughes, A.M.*) *The Divine observation*:—The question is not whether the righteous is apparently stronger than the ungodly, but what is the relation of the Lord to them both. The final award is not with man but with God. The destiny of the righteous and the ungodly is as distinct as their character. There is no blending of one into the other—the one lives, the other perishes. Consistently throughout the Bible life is always associated with obedience or righteousness, and death with disobedience or unrighteousness. Great value attaches to a consistency of this kind. It has a bearing upon the character of God Himself. It is because He never changes in His own moral quality that He never changes in relation to the actions of men. That "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" is the good man's supreme comfort. Not that the good man challenges the Divine scrutiny in the matter of his actions, but that he is able to invite the Lord to look into the secret purpose of his heart and understand what is the supreme wish of his life. To know that the motive is right is to know that the end must be good. What we have to be supremely anxious about is the main purpose or desire of life; that being right, actions will adjust themselves accordingly, and, notwithstanding innumerable mistakes, the substance of the character shall be good, and a crown of glory shall be granted to the faithful servant. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The way of the righteous*:—Or is it that the prophet saith not, God knoweth the righteous, but the way of the righteous; perhaps lest men, for doing one or two good deeds in all their life, should claim to be righteous, and for such righteousness claim acquaintance with God; and so indeed God might have acquaintance enough, seeing no man is so wicked but he may sometimes have good thoughts and do good deeds; but this will not serve: it must be a way of righteousness before God will know it. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *Resolute righteousness safe*:—And here the godly may take his comfort by the way, that it is not their slippings or treading awry, which may be by ignorance, or infirmity, that can make, with God, this shipwreck of perishing; it must be a way of ungodliness, which is not usually made without much walking and exercising, without resolute intentions and endeavours, without set purposes and persistings, that if a man be sure he is free from these, he may then be confident he is safe from perishing. (*Ibid.*)



## PSALM II.

**VERS. 1-12. Why do the heathen rage?**—*The prophetic element in the Psalm*:—But though the poem was occasioned by some national event, we must not confine its application to that event, nor need we even suppose that the singer himself did not feel that his words went beyond their first occasion. He begins to speak of an earthly king, and his wars with the nations of the earth; but his words are too great to have all their meaning exhausted in David, or Solomon, or Ahaz, or any Jewish monarch. Or ever he is aware, the local and the temporal are swallowed up in the universal and the eternal. The king who sits on David's throne has become glorified and transfigured in the light of the promise. The picture is half-ideal and half-actual. It concerns itself with the present, but with that only so far as it is typical of greater things to come. The true King who, to the prophet's mind, is to fulfil all his largest hopes, has taken the place of the visible and earthly king. The nations are not merely those who are now mustering for the battle, but whatsoever opposeth and exalteth itself against Jehovah and His anointed. Hence the Psalm is in the nature of a prophecy, and still waits for its final accomplishment. It had a real fulfilment, no doubt, in the banding together of Herod and Pontius Pilate against Christ (Acts iv. 25-27). But this was not a literal one. It may be said to have an ever-repeated fulfilment in the history of the Church, which is a history of God's kingdom upon earth, a kingdom which in all ages has the powers of the world arrayed against it, and in all ages the same disastrous result to those who have risen "against the Lord and against His anointed." And so it shall be to the end, when, perhaps, that hostility will be manifested in some yet deadlier form, only to be overthrown for ever, that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. (*J. J. S. Peronne.*) *A magnificent lyric*:—The true basis of this Psalm is not some petty revolt of subject tribes, but Nathan's prophecy in 2 Sam. vii., which sets forth the dignity and dominion of the King of Israel as God's son and representative. This grand poem may be called an idealising of the monarch of Israel, but it is an idealising with expected realisation. The Psalm is prophecy as well as poetry; and whether it had contemporaneous persons and events as a starting-point or not, its theme is a real person, fully possessing the prerogatives and wielding the dominion which Nathan had declared to be God's gift to the King of Israel. The Psalm falls into four strophes of three verses each, in the first three of which the reader is made spectator and auditor of vividly painted scenes, while, in the last, the Psalmist exhorts the rebels to return to allegiance. In the first strophe (vers. 1-3) the conspiracy of banded rebels is set before us with extraordinary force. All classes and orders are united in revolt, and hurry and eagerness mark their action, and throb in their words. Vers. 4-6 change the scene to heaven. The lower half of the picture is all eager motion and strained effort; the upper is full of Divine calm. God needs not to rise from His throned tranquillity, but regards, undisturbed, the disturbances of earth. What shall we say of that daring and awful image of the laughter of God? The attribution of such action to Him is so bold that no danger of misunderstanding it is possible. It sends us at once to look for its translation, which probably lies in the thought of the essential ludicrousness of opposition, which is discerned in heaven to be so utterly groundless and hopeless as to be absurd. Another speaker is now heard, the anointed king, who in the third strophe (vers. 7-9) bears witness to himself, and claims universal dominion as his by a Divine decree. In vers. 10-12 the poet speaks in solemn exhortation. The kings addressed are the rebel monarchs whose power seemed so puny when measured against that of "my King." But all possessors of power and influence are addressed. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The holy war*:—A vivid picture of the revolt against Messiah. I. THE EXTENT OF THE REVOLT. "Nations," "People," "Kings," "Rulers." Christ has encountered this opposition—1. In all nations. 2. In all ranks. 3. In all generations. Christ was rejected by His own age (Acts iv. 27). II. THE DETERMINATION BY WHICH THIS REVOLT WAS CHARACTERISED. It is—1. Deliberate. 2. Combined. 3. Resolute. III. THE SECRET CAUSE OF THIS REVOLT. They rebel against the laws of God in Christ. IV. THE VANITY OF THIS OPPOSITION TO CHRIST. 1. The unreasonableness of it. "Why do the heathen rage?" No satisfactory answer can be given. 2. The uselessness of it. It is "vain," because useless. V. THE CONCLUSION. The Psalmist gives—1. An admonition: "Be wise now." 2. A direction: "Serve the Lord." Do Him homage. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The Messiah King*:—

I. THE KING (vers. 6-7). 1. Divinely appointed. "I have set." The Father speaking. 2. Divinely anointed. The name Christ or Messiah signifies anointed. 3. Assured of universal rule (ver. 8). The world belongs to Him. He has created it. He has redeemed it. He shall ultimately possess it. II. MESSIAH'S FOES (vers. 1, 2, 3). The citadel assailed because of its Sovereign; the Church the target of malice and mischief because of the kindly Christ. Crowned heads in general have been sworn enemies of the Lord's anointed. The hostility of these foes is—1. Deliberate. They "imagine," rather "meditate." 2. Combined. "They take counsel together." 3. Determined. They "set themselves," as fully resolved to accomplish their object. 4. Violent. They "rage." Nothing has ever excited so much hostility as Christ and His Church. III. MESSIAH'S VICTORY (vers. 4, 5). Fourth verse is strikingly metaphorical. The Victor is in the heavens—watching the plots, reading the thoughts, hearing the decisions of His enemies, and He "sitteth" there, serene as the march of stars and suns, calm as the glassy lake locked in the embrace of summer morning. Shall "have them in derision." Their efforts shall result in self-defeat and self-destruction, and help to the realisation of God's own purposes. The devil and his agents often outwit themselves; they mean extinction, but God overrules it for permanent extension. No decree of the Divine government can be frustrated. Truth must prevail. He shall "speak in wrath." His wrath is not vindictiveness, but the recoil of His love; not revenge, but retribution. IV. MESSIAH'S MESSAGE (vers. 10-12). This is a call to—1. Teachableness. "Be instructed." Learn your folly in opposing the Lord. 2. Service. "Serve the Lord." Do His bidding. Be governed by His laws. 3. Homage. "Kiss the Son." The Eastern mode of showing homage to a king. 4. A call backed by the most weighty reasons: "lest He be angry." (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

*The King in Zion:*—Two contrasted topics, the King and the rebellion of His subjects. I. THE KING. 1. The dignity of His person. Not a King, or the King, but "my King." One able and worthy to represent me. 2. The extent of His dominion. The nations of men measure not the realm of Christ. All grades of intelligences throughout the universe owe Him allegiance. 3. The greatness of His power. Wide as is His kingdom, His power is adequate to hold and govern it. Spiritual supremacy involves supremacy of every name. To secure it, upheavals and overturnings are inevitable. Under the pressure of spiritual forces, all other forces must give way. 4. The blessedness of His sway. The prophetic representations of the Messiah's reign are glorious and happy. All blessings come down upon the people. II. THE REBELLION OF HIS SUBJECTS. 1. Its universality. 2. Its wickedness. Men's treatment of Christ is more gratuitously wicked than anything else. He came, self-moved, to do them infinite good. 3. Its impotence. 4. Its folly. This rebellion is misery in its progress, and ruin in its result. It fills the soul with wretchedness and fear in time, and leaves it under the wrath of God in eternity. (*Monday Club Sermons.*)

*Messiah's rule:*—I. THE DETERMINED HATE OF THE PEOPLE (vers. 1-3). The word "rage" suggests the idea of Oriental frenzy and excitement of a tumultuous concourse of crowds of people, all wildly angry. "Imagine" is the same word as is rendered "meditate" in Psalm i. 2. While the godly meditate on God's law, the ungodly meditate a project which is vain. Let us not be in league with the world, for its drift is against the Lord. II. THE DIVINE TRANQUILLITY (vers. 4-6). The scene shifts to heaven; God is ever undismayed. III. MESSIAH'S MANIFESTO (vers. 7-9). Standing forth, He produces and recites one of the eternal decrees. Before time was, He was the only-begotten of the Father. The world is His heritage, but the gift is conditional on prayer. For this He pleads, and let us plead with Him. The pastoral staff for the sheep; the "iron rod" for those who oppose. IV. OVERTURES AND COUNSELS OF PEACE (vers. 10-12). "Kiss," the expression of homage (1 Sam. x. 1). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

*The reign of Christ:*—The Psalm is full of Christ. It is referred to six times by New Testament writers, and applied to Christ. It is a beautiful dramatic prophecy, in which several personages alternately speak momentous truths, to animate the Church of God in her conflict with sin and the powers of hell. The two leading thoughts are—the powerful opposition, but total discomfiture of Christ's enemies; the certainty, universality, and blessedness of His reign. 1. The opposition would be universal, and characterise all classes of men. 2. It is intense. The heathen "rage." 3. It is organised. They consult to find pretexts to justify their hostility. It is violent and aggressive. The restraints of the gospel are irksome and hateful. When argument and oratory failed, force was employed. It was foretold that all the crafty counsel and all the violent opposition should fail. Vain

to imagine that human craft can contravene omniscience, or human power overcome omnipotence. It is the potsherd striving with his Maker. If God's expostulation be disregarded, then He speaketh in judgment. While adverse nations perish, the kingdom of Christ shall continue and become universal. When the Son says, "I will declare the decree," He has respect to future revelations as well as to the one then announced. He intimates that henceforth there shall be brighter and more ample discoveries of the Divine purpose. And the promise was verified by fact. The decree is not only declared, it is confirmed by the resurrection, the intercession and the enthronement of Messiah. The universality of the Redeemer's kingdom is certain, but do existing facts look towards its consummation? Wonderful preparations are indicative of this. The great programmes of discovery and of instrumentality are nearly complete. The great programme of prophecy is nearly accomplished. (*W. Cooke, D.D.*) *A great national hope*:—This Psalm belongs to the class called Messianic. It is full of that great national hope of the Jews concerning Him who was to come. A nation without hope is like a man without hope. Cut off hope from any man, or any group of men, and at once you paralyse the worth of everything. The Jewish nation was full of vitality. The noblest kind of national hope, the highest idea of "manifest destiny," is not simply a great event, but a great character. It is the ideal of a great character that is to come to them, and then to create great character throughout all the people. The hope of the coming of such a being was the ruling idea of the Jewish people. A character is always nobler than any event that is going to happen. A great nature remains as a perpetual inspiration. Every Jewish child that was born might be the Messiah; every king might hold in his hand the Messianic sceptre. Through all their life there ran this great anticipation, this inextinguishable hope. We do not know of whom this second Psalm was written; we do not even know by whom it was written. What is the philosophy of the Messianic Psalms? Shall we say that back in those distant days men anticipated just what was going to come when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and did His work in Galilee? There was nothing so monstrous as that. The whole of the Bible is much more natural than we are apt to make it. This Messianic Psalm was taken and applied in its completeness to the Messiah, who had really revealed Himself at last. The words then found a kingship worthy of them, and were sung of Christ. There are three speakers, or series of utterances. The first is the writer of the Psalm, who stands, as it were, to call the attention of the people to the two great speakers. These are the Lord Jehovah, and the Coming One, the Anointed, the King, the Messiah Himself. The writer stands as the chorus in the great tragedy. It is a great cry of astonishment from one who sees a great mercy coming to the world of guilt, bringing in redemption to the world, and the world setting itself against it. It is the everlasting wonder of the soul that knows Jesus Christ, that this world, with Jesus Christ waiting at its doors to save it, can set itself against Him, and not let Him in. But God's great purpose of making Jesus King of the world is unchanged and unchangeable. Whether the world will have Him or not, Christ is to be King of the world. The world has heard that, and it has brought a certain deep peace into the soul of mankind. The third speaker is Christ Himself. He says, "I will declare the decree." Christ is in the world, and He is sure of the world. Sitting upon the throne, recognising clearly who set Him there, He will never leave it until all the nations shall be His nations. Among the wonders of these last nineteen centuries has been the quiet certain confidence of Christianity. It cannot be crowded out and lost among the multitudes of mankind who are careless or hostile. It possesses Divine grace, which some day will be sufficient for the healing of the nations. At the close we come back to the writer of the chorus that tells us what the meaning of it all is. The Messianic Psalm presses itself into the lives we are living, and declares that if we are wicked we shall be powerless. If the most humble man puts himself upon the side of righteousness in company with Christ, if in his own little lot he does things pure and good and kind, he shall have a part with Christ in His great conquest of the world. He whom we worship as Christ is the centre of the world. Everything is verging to Him. All the past, however unconsciously, is ruled by Him; and all the future, however little it may now know its Master, will ultimately recognise Him. He who is everything, sanctification, redemption, in the fortunes of the individual soul, is the world's redemption. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *Imagine a vain thing*.—*The opposition to God and His Christ*:—The Psalm opens abruptly. Here is no prelude; it is an utterance of amazement, begotten in the soul, and breaking from the lips of one who looks out upon the nations and generations of man.



He discerns, in all the widespread view, one perpetual restlessness, one ceaseless movement of discontent, the throbbing of a rebellion that cannot be appeased, of a vain, bitter, and ceaseless revolt. It is a revolt against God and His Christ running through the centuries, underlying human history, breaking out in fresh manifestations age after age, finding new utterance from the kings and rulers and wise men of this world. Why does the world fret against the government of God? Why does the world resent and resist the rule of the righteous God, and of the redeeming Lord Jesus Christ? Whether it be the sins and sorrows of one city that come within your range; whether it be the notes and tones of the very last phase and stage of philosophic speculation; whether it be the problems that vex and chafe and worry the civilised world; whether the spectacle of our exaggerated, over-developed militarism, under which the whole continent of Europe groans and bleeds; or whether the vexed problems that lie in our own streets and houses, alike the question arises—Why does the world, in things great and small, chafe against the rule of God—God the Source of wisdom, the Giver of all good? against Christ, the Redeemer of human nature! against Christ, man's true King, Leader and Guide and Friend and Shepherd and Bishop of souls? "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" (*F. W. Macdonald, M.A.*) *Authorship and meaning of the Psalm*:—The thoughts of the Psalm are so fresh and bold, and the poetical elevation so great, that the thoughts here seem to have for the first time taken hold of the writer, who is one whom they directly concern. 1. Some young king, entering upon the rule of God's Kingdom, has borne in upon his mind, from his very position, those strange and unprecedented words of Nathan—words of inexhaustible meaning, and yet quite fresh from their novelty—and entering into their spirit as, to a pure and thoughtful mind, they opened up regions of contemplation interminable in extent and full of wonders, and combining them perhaps with some show of opposition to his rule at home, or some threatened defection from his authority by tribes abroad,—the young king cast his thoughts and aspirations into this hymn. 2. And what young monarch was in such a condition except Solomon? Every one of the conditions of the problem suits him. He was the seed of David, and therefore the son of God. He was appointed king on Zion Hill. His rule tended to universality, and his aspirations, being those of a profound intellect and, at the same time, of an uncorrupted youth, must have aimed at conferring on all peoples the blessings of God's Kingdom. 3. If we could realise to ourselves the thoughts and emotions of those early Davidic kings—standing, as all of them did, to Jehovah as His anointed, bearing all of them the title of His Son, and pointing forward to such a heritage, even all peoples; and yet so surrounded with darkness, and having but such imperfect instruments in their hands wherewith to realise their ideal, and so circumscribed on every side—what aspirations must have filled their hearts as they stood thus before so high a destiny! And yet, as all things seemed to make it impossible for them to reach it, what perplexities must have tormented them till, wearied out by the riddles of their position, some of them turned wilfully aside from the true path! 4. But if we can ill fathom the thoughts of these great creative minds, how much less those of the true theocratic King, the true Messiah and Son of God, when entering upon His kingdom, and standing at its threshold with all the possibilities of it clear before Him, and the way needful to be trod to reach it also clear! We know that He was sometimes troubled in spirit, and sometimes rejoiced greatly, alternating between a gloom more dark than falls on any son of man and a brightness more luminous than created light. But with full view of His work He entered on it, and with full view of the glory He prosecuted it to the end. 5. The Psalm, if a typical Psalm in the mind of its human author, referred to the installation of the theocratic king on Zion, who took God's place over His kingdom, and stood to Him in all the endearing relations expressed by the name of Son. The writer to the Hebrews finds in it the statement of the manifestation of the true theocratic King and Son in power from His resurrection and ascension; and His principle is just. The one was a rehearsal of the other. All this Old Testament machinery, and this calling one who was king by the name Son, and the like, would never have been but for the other; it was only in order to suggest the other and prepare for it. It was a prophecy of the other. It contained the same ideas. And its having been imperfect, as it was, implied that the other—that which was perfect—should also be. Only, that which the Old Testament writer had not yet foreseen had now taken place; the material embodiment of the ideas of the kingdom had passed away, and all things had become spiritual in Christ. (*Professor A. B. Davidson.*)



Ver. 2. **Against the Lord, and against His anointed.**—*Taking counsel against Christ*:—Anointed here means the same as Messiah, and both words the same as Christ in the New Testament. How literally were the words of this verse fulfilled, when Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the rulers of the Jews combined together to put Jesus to death! How cordially they hated each other; and yet how cordially they united in persecuting Jesus! This has been the history of our religion from the beginning. Men who would take counsel together in nothing else have taken counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. Christianity has been opposed by every form of religion beneath the sun. The civil ruler has opposed it with the sword; the bigot with the screw, the wheel, and the stake; the philosopher with sophistry and derision; and the multitude with lawless violence. All have been alike eager to nail it to the cross, thrust a spear into its side, and place upon its head a crown of thorns. And when asked to spare it the language of all has been, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" This feature of heterogeneous opposition to our religion is conspicuous in all modern and liberal and infidel conventions, where men of all beliefs and of no belief, ignoring for the time being all their differences, unite heart and soul in a crusade against the Word of God. They care little what stars occupy a place in the religious heavens of the world, provided the Star of Bethlehem be not of the number. They will tolerate any other form of religion sooner than the religion of the Lord and of His anointed. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

Ver. 3. **Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.**—*Sinners vainly attempt to dissolve their obligations*:—I. THE OBLIGATIONS SINNERS ARE UNDER TO GOD. 1. Natural obligations. Their nature, as dependent creatures, forms an intimate connection between them and their Maker. They cannot exist a moment without the immediate exertion of Divine power. Their dependence is absolute and universal. It respects all their natural powers and faculties, whether corporeal or mental. They are not sufficient to think, or speak, or act of themselves, independently of the presence and efficiency of God. 2. Moral obligations. God is a Being possessed of every natural and moral excellence. He will never do anything contrary to the perfect benevolence of His heart. Every sinner is capable of knowing that God is perfectly good, so he is under moral obligation to love Him for His goodness. 3. Legal obligation. God's absolute supremacy gives Him an independent right to assume the character of a law-giver. It properly belongs to Him to give law to all His intelligent creatures. II. SINNERS ENDEAVOUR TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM ALL THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH THEY ARE UNDER TO GOD. They wish and endeavour to break His bands, and cast away His cords. 1. This appears by their mode of speaking upon this subject. 2. By their mode of reasoning as well as speaking. They endeavour to reason away all their obligations to God. 3. It appears from their mode of acting, also, that they desire and endeavour to free themselves from all obligations to become reconciled and obedient to God. III. ALL THEIR ENDEAVOURS TO GET LOOSE FROM THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD WILL BE IN VAIN. 1. They cannot destroy the existence of God. 2. Or their own existence. Improvement. (1) We may see what is the great subject of controversy between them and their Creator. (2) Though sinners are naturally disposed to free themselves from their obligations to God, yet they are not always sensible of it. They commonly think that they have no such disposition to complain of the bands and cords by which they are bound to God, and to desire and endeavour to break and cast them away. (3) We see why sinners are the most opposed to the most essential and important doctrines of the gospel. (4) If they endeavour to free themselves from their obligations, then they always endeavour to stifle convictions. (5) If sinners are under such natural, moral, and legal obligations to God as have been mentioned, then He can awaken and convince them at any time He pleases. (6) Sinners are extremely averse from prayer. (7) All sinners, without exception, are bound to be religious or to fulfil their obligations to their Maker, who has made them rational, immortal, and accountable creatures. (8) If sinners are bound to God by bands and cords which they cannot break nor cast away, then it is their immediate and imperious duty to cease from contending with their Maker, and to become cordially reconciled to the bands and cords by which He has bound them to Himself. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Tendency of the young to infidelity*:—1. From their limited views. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, as it too often encourages self-conceit and lays the foundation for many a hasty conclusion. A slight and imperfect view of the

subject is taken as the whole. Judgment is rendered without even hearing the evidence. A few second-hand objections are suffered to cover the whole ground. Bacon says, "It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds back to religion;—for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity." 2. From their defective training. In the religious education of youth the principal things have not always been made prominent. The youth perhaps knows no other Christianity than that which belongs to his own denomination, or some idle ceremony or some doubtful tenet has been inculcated with all the solemnity of religion and all the sanctions of eternity. The result is a narrow-minded, bitter bigotry. When the charm is broken, and its influence destroyed, the mind, left loose, too often swings at once to infidelity. The training is often defective in another way. That the mind may be free from unfounded prejudice and sectarian predilections, nothing is taught. To escape one evil they run into another and more fatal one. The native soil brings forth thorns and briars. 3. Another source of infidelity is the conduct of too many called Christians. 4. Another is an uneasiness of restraint. The spirit of wildness and wilfulness is manifest in the first dawn of intellect. The earliest period of childhood shows restlessness and hatred of restraint. Thousands are infidels because they dread the inspection of God and hate the restraints of religion. Their lives require such an opiate to their fears. 5. A love of distinction—an ambition to appear above the vulgar. Young men and boys affect infidelity for the same reason that they learn to swear or to chew tobacco. It gives an air of spirit and independence that spurns old traditions and vulgar prejudices. 6. Some are infidels in self-defence. They were once, perhaps, not far from the kingdom of God—it may be, deemed themselves citizens of that kingdom. But the world spread its charms before them. And they have found shelter from scorn and reproach in blank infidelity. Combine all these causes which are continually at work and is it wonderful that in the face of all the light of truth there should still be infidels? (*D. Merrill.*) *Bands that cannot be broken:*—The yoke that our Saviour would lay on this world is not a galling and exasperating code of laws, but a yoke in which humanity would be renewed, transformed, uplifted to the highest and eternal joy. It is of that "yoke and burden" that the world's proud captains say, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." Bands and cords! It is an invidious description of "the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light." What can be the issue of the effort to break the bands and cords of the Almighty? What can come of it? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." The Psalmist is very bold: the laughter of God! the derision of the Most High! What a figure to use! It is a poet's phrase, but it is a prophet's truth. There is a spendthrift who is resenting the bands of economics and arithmetic; who says in regard to a plain and accurate cash statement, "I will break these bands asunder," and in his foolishness he makes the attempt; but he cannot divert from their inflexible proportions the laws of parts and quantities, of plus and minus considerations. He may wish that ten and ten should make twenty-five, but they will not. "He that sitteth in the heavens"! Great fixed proportions!—they won't bend to amuse a prodigal; they won't break to gratify a spendthrift. They claim their value and issue their writ, and the man who has lived and spent as though two and two made fifty is the object of the laughter of arithmetical law, and is by it had in derision. (*F. W. Macdonald.*)

Vers. 4, 5. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh . . . and vex them in His sore displeasure.*—*First a laugh then a smite:*—The heathen and the people, the kings and the rulers are answered with contempt, they are laughed at and derided; and if this be not enough to change their spirit and their purpose, they will be spoken to in wrath, and vexed in sore displeasure. It is interesting and instructive to remark how creation first laughs at and derides men who oppose it, and how in the next place it avenges the insults that are offered to its laws. When Canute rebuked the waves the sea laughed at him, and the waves had him in derision; had he remained upon the position he had chosen, laughter and derision would have been changed for vengeance and overthrow. Let a man attempt to put down the wind, and the only possible answer is derision; let him attempt to defy the lightning, and he may perish under its stroke. There is but a short distance between

the derision of nature and its penal judgments. So every attempt to revile the power of God is contemned, and every insult offered to His holiness is avenged. A very curious process is indicated by these two verses. The laughter is expressive of an eternal law; things are not so constituted that they can be turned about at the pleasure of the wicked, nor is the purpose of the universe so fickle that the wrath of man can affect its fulfilment; great strength can afford to deride; infinite power can best express its own consciousness of almightiness by smiling upon all the hosts which array themselves against it. But this answer of contemptuous laughter must not be the only reply, for contempt can seldom have any moral issue of a really substantial and blessed kind; there must come a time when law must avenge itself upon those who would insult its majesty or mock its power. First, laughter, as a proof of the utter impossibility of injuriously affecting the standards and purposes of God; after laughter must come the judgment, which shows how dangerous it is to trifle with fire, and how awful a thing it is to defy the wrath of righteousness. It is for every man to consider under what particular phase of the Divine regard he is now living. For a period he may be amused, as it were, at certain phases of the opposition of nature, or the awkwardness of life; but let him not suppose that he sees the whole of the case: such opposition and awkwardness may suddenly be displaced by judgment, and vengeance, and destiny irrevocable. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The laughter of God*:—They scoff at us. God laughs at them. Severe Cato thought that laughter did not become the gravity of Roman consuls, and is it attributed to the majesty of heaven . . . Pharaoh imagined that by drowning the Israelite males he had found a way to root their name from the earth, but when at the same time his own daughter in his own court gave princely education to Moses, their deliverer, did not God laugh? Is Dagon put up in his place again? God's smile shall take off his head and his hands and leave him neither wit to guide nor power to subsist. . . . He permitted His temple to be sacked and rifled, the holy vessels to be profaned and caroused in; but did not God's smile make Belshazzar to tremble? Oh, what are His frowns if His smiles be so terrible? (*Thomas Adams.*)

**Ver. 6. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.**—*The sovereignty of Zion's King*:—Christ is King in Zion, the alone Sovereign of His Church by His Father's appointment and ordination. I. **THIS SOVEREIGN PRINCE.** The sovereignty and royalty appears—1. From Scripture prophecy. 2. From types. 3. From titles. 4. From the concurring testimony of enemies and strangers. 5. From the badges of sovereignty everywhere ascribed to Him. See what happy persons the true and loyal subjects of Christ are. See the dangerous risk they run that invade His government and condemn His authority. Who are these? They that turn the authority derived from Him, to the hurt and prejudice of His kingdom and interest. They who venture to model His visible kingdom in the world after their own fancy. They who walk willingly after the commandments of men, in opposition to the commands of Christ. They will be found equally guilty who stand by and see those injuries done to the King of Zion by others, and are silent without witnessing against those things. II. **THIS KINGDOM, AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF IT.** The kingdom of the Son of God is twofold: it is either essential or personal. His essential kingdom belongs to Him as to His Divine nature. His personal or mediatory kingdom belongs to Him as Immanuel, God-man. In this He acts by a delegate authority or a power committed by the Father for the salvation of the elect that were given Him. The mediatory kingdom is either more general or special. His general mediatory kingdom extends itself over heaven, earth, and hell. The kingdom or Church of Christ is sometimes called His "body" and His "flock." This Church is either militant on earth or triumphant in heaven. Why is this Church called the "holy hill of Zion"? The literal Mount Zion had two heads, one called "Moriah," the other "the City of David." Zion was the place of public worship. All the sacred things of God were kept there. In Scripture an opposition is stated between Mount Zion and Mount Sinai. Consider some of the properties of Christ's kingdom. 1. It is spiritual. 2. Of large extent. 3. Not populous. It is—4. A kingdom of light. 5. A heavenly kingdom. 6. A regular and well-governed kingdom. 7. Much hated by the devil and the world. 8. A stable, firm, and everlasting kingdom. 9. A holy kingdom. Consider the actual execution and administration of this kingdom. By the royal authority of Zion's King He overrules and governs all creatures and all their actions, yea, the most dark and cloudy dispensations for His own and His Father's glory. With respect



to His invisible kingdom of believers, there are these acts of His royal power that He puts forth. 1. He subdues them to Himself. 2. He writes His law on their hearts. 3. He enforces subjection to His laws. 4. He casts a copy of obedience unto all His subjects, and calls them to imitate Him. 5. He actuates and excites all His subjects to obedience to Him by His own spirit. 6. He meekens the hearts of His subjects to a due regard to all the intimations of His mind and will. 7. He corrects and chastens His subjects. 8. He commands peace, quiet, comfort, and deliverance to them. Prove that Christ has a visible Church from these considerations. He Himself is visible as to His human nature. The laws, ordinances, and officers of Christ are all visible. There is a visible difference between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the devil. The charge that is given to ministers in the dispensation of the solemn ordinances of the New Testament proves that Christ has a visible Church. And there is a visible and open war betwixt the seed of the woman and the serpent. Notice some acts of the royal authority of Christ in His visible kingdom. Giving the lively oracles of His Word to His visible Church. Appointing the form of its government. Appointing its officers, and the way in which they are to be chosen. Appointing ordinances, such as preaching. Appointing censures for good discipline and order in His kingdom. Authorising the officers to meet in a judicative capacity in His name for the better and joint regulating of the affairs of His kingdom. Bounding and limiting all the courts and officers of His kingdom to govern His subjects, and to teach them no other thing than He has commanded. Giving express orders unto all His subjects to examine all spirits, doctrines, laws, impositions at the bar of the Word, and to contend earnestly for the purity of His truth and worship, ordinances and institutions. III. WHY HAS GOD THE FATHER SET AND ORDAINED HIM TO BE KING IN ZION? This flows originally from the sovereign love and good pleasure of God. It was for the Father's glory and honour to set Him upon the throne. It was that He might bring about salvation to His mystical body, the Church. Because His shoulders alone were able to bear the weight of the government. Seeing Christ bought the Church to Himself with the price of His blood, it was fit that the government of the Church should be committed to Him. Application—(1) Words of exhortation to all those who profess themselves the subjects of Christ's kingdom. Imitate your King. Trust Him at all times. Be much at your King's throne as supplicants. Obey your King's laws. Keep His ordinances of worship. Stand up for the honour of your King. (2) Words of exhortation to you who are yet strangers to Zion's King, or enemies to His kingdom and government. Surrender your rebellious arms, and submit unto His royal authority. (*E. Erskine.*) *The royalty of the Son of God*:—I should question whether there could be produced from either sacred or profane literature a more remarkable instance of the power of putting a great deal into a few words than this Psalm. Its theme is "the glory of the Son of God." But that is not set forth in abstract sentences that would be crude. This is a great poem, and the theme is painted pictorially. There is not one picture, but four. They are different, yet all closely connected, and at the end are brought together into dramatic unity. The artistic balance is perfectly kept, the same number of words being given to each picture. There is no hurry or overcrowding. Every picture is painted broadly and freely, and even with a great deal of elaboration, and yet the whole Psalm only contains twelve verses. Look at the four pictures. I. REVOLT. Painted in the first three verses. The nations crowded about the Holy Land have become restive under the yoke; a spirit of disaffection has spread. The movement has come to a head, and there has been effected an immense combination of insurgent states. The second verse takes us into the council-tent. At last they come to a unanimous resolution (ver. 3), "Let us break their bands asunder." That was the form of the truth; but the truth itself is perfectly modern. It is the resistance of the world to the gospel of Christ; it is the attempt of the persecutor and the traditionalist to arrest the progress of the kingdom of light and love; it is the natural enmity of your heart and mind to God and His Christ. II. DERISION. At this point the poetic originality of this Psalm reaches its climax. This second scene is in heaven. Up in heaven there is seated One who is observing all this which is going on on earth. It is a very bold stroke of imagination to represent the Deity as laughing. It is not, however, unexampled. I want to say that we do not laugh enough; we do not sympathise enough with God's laughter: we take some things too seriously, we tremble too much for the ark of God. When some one begins vainly to give us his opinions about religion, of which he has no experience, we ought to see the ludicrous side of the matter; we should not become too angry about



it. III. INTERPRETATION. At this point the words of the poet become most pregnant and short-hand, so to speak. The scene is again changed. We are not in heaven now. Not among the insurgents, but in the opposite camp, because it is the Anointed, the Leader of the army, who is the speaker. He says, "I will declare the decree," and then He begins not to repeat it in the exact words, but to give the drift of it and its meaning both to it and to them. "It means this," He says, "The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Among the Hebrews the reigning sovereign was sometimes called God's son. No doubt all this referred originally to some Hebrew king and some crisis in his history. But beneath the words is a far more comprehensive reference to another. The reign of Christ is a reign of love. His kingdom is set up not upon the bodies, but in the hearts of men, and yet at the name of Jesus every knee must bow.

IV. ADMONITION. Who is speaking now? Probably the poet himself. Like the chorus in a Greek play, he draws the moral of the whole. He urges the leaders of the insurgents to pause and be admonished. They can see themselves that this enterprise of theirs is hopeless, and that it may be fatal to themselves. Therefore it pleases them to kiss the Son, that is, to give Him the sign of allegiance. It should be, "for His wrath is kindled at a little." It is kindled by the affront shown to His Son; that He will always terribly avenge. (*James Stalker, D.D.*) *Christ's kingly office*.—I. CHRIST IS A KING. 1. He was prophesied of in the Old Testament under this character (Gen. xlix. 10; Isa. xi. 1, 2, 3). 2. He was of old promised to His people under this notion. 3. He has all the ensigns of royalty, Sword, Sceptre, Crown, Escutcheon (Rev. v. 5), Throne. 4. He sealed this truth with His precious blood. II. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM. Christ has a twofold kingdom. An essential kingdom, and an economical or mediatory kingdom. The administration is either external (general or particular) or internal in the hearts of His people.

III. THE ACTS OF CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE. Subduing sinners to Himself, ruling and governing them, defending and protecting them, restraining His own and their enemies, and conquering them. Christ exercises His kingly office in ruling and governing His subjects: both externally, by laws, officers, and discipline; and internally, writing His law in their hearts, and persuading them by His spirit.

IV. PROPERTIES OR QUALITIES OF ZION'S KING. He is of ancient, glorious, and honourable extract. He is an absolute King, who makes laws for His subjects, but is not bound by any Himself. His will is His law. He is a wise, powerful, just, merciful, meek and patient, beautiful, opulent, everlasting King. Improvement. 1. The kings of the earth have no ground to grudge the kingdom of Christ its freedom in their dominions, seeing it is a spiritual kingdom. 2. There is a government of the Church distinct from and independent of the civil government. 3. The government of the Church is not alterable by any power on earth, civil and ecclesiastical. 4. The Church shall ride out all the storms that can blow upon her, whether from earth or hell. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Christ, King of Zion*.—Christ as Redeemer executes the offices of prophet, priest and king. As a king He applies the redemption He has purchased so as to secure the full and eternal blessedness of those for whom it was designed. There is a principle of aversion to the truth that Christ is king in the heart of every regenerate man—a dislike of Christ's spiritual authority.

I. THE KINGDOM DESCRIBED AS GOD'S HOLY HILL OF ZION. Zion was one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. The name came to be appropriated to the temple and its courts. It is also applied to the worshippers in the temple if not to the whole inhabitants of Jerusalem. It is used to signify the Church of God. Sometimes it is applied to the visible Church, sometimes to the invisible, as Heb. xii. 22. In the text the whole Church is to be understood. The visible Church is as much Christ's Church as the invisible. It owes its existence to Him. Christ is King of Zion, and as King of Zion He is head over all—exalted above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion. II. THE TITLE BY WHICH HE HOLDS THE KINGDOM. He reigns by the Father's appointment. His dominion as King of Zion is delegated and official. It is not the dominion that belongs to Him essentially as God that is here spoken of, but the power with which He is officially invested as Mediator by the act of the Father. His dominion in this respect is the Father's gift; bestowed on Him in fulfilment of the conditions of the everlasting covenant, as the recompense of His obedience and sufferings, as His reward for finishing the work which His Father gave Him to do. The dominion with which He is entrusted supposes His essential dignity as a Divine Person; for we cannot imagine that such dominion would ever have been committed to a mere creature. His appointment to His mediatorial throne was formally made when the covenant of grace was entered

into in the counsels of eternity. It was not till His resurrection and ascension to heaven that His claim to royal dignity was fully recognised. But He exercised this authority from the beginning of time, in virtue of that atonement which He was to offer for the sins of men. III. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE KINGDOM. This may be viewed, either in reference to the outward organisation and arrangements of His Church or in reference to that spiritual power—that Divine resistless energy, by which He effectually accomplishes the great ends for which His kingdom has been set up, and is maintained in the world. Christ prescribes the laws and institutions of His Church, and appoints its office-bearers. But outward arrangements would be ineffectual without a Divine efficacy—without the power of that Spirit who is sent by Christ, and acts in accordance with Christ's commission. IV. THE PECULIAR PROPERTIES OF THIS KINGDOM. 1. It is a spiritual kingdom. The great design and purpose for which it has been erected is spiritual and heavenly. Human government views man in connection with this world. The kingdom of Christ views Him in connection with eternity. Its ultimate end is the advancement of the glory of God; its immediate end is the salvation of sinners. 2. It is destined to be universal. All adverse power and authority will be overthrown, all enemies vanquished, and nothing left which is not put under Him. 3. It shall last for ever. It will not only continue while the earth exists; it will last through the endless ages of eternity. (*James Ewing.*) *Christ, the King of nations*:—I. CHRIST AS KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. xix. 16). In these words we have an important part of Christ's mediatorial character brought before us. When this name is applied to Christ we are to understand that power which Christ, as King and Head of Zion, has acquired over the nations and kingdoms of this world. The Church and the State being distinct institutions—the one being positive, expressly revealed, and exhibited in the Word of God; the other being founded on natural principles, and not on scriptural revelation—it is evident that as the rulers in the one hold their appointment directly from Christ as Mediator, so the kings and rulers in the other hold their appointment primarily from God as the Moral Governor of the world. But, whilst recognising this distinction, it does not follow that the powers which be and are ordained of God have no relation whatever to Christ as Mediator. Christ not merely the King and Head of Zion, but Christ the King of nations, by virtue of that power with which He is invested by the Father. Thus it is written, "The Father hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church." Christ has power over all things. He has power and authority over societies and communities, and also over nations, which occupy so important a position in the social scale. Thus kings and rulers are spoken of as holding their appointment from the Father, but in subordination to Christ the Mediator, and subject to His control—"By Me kings reign and princes decree justice" (Eph. i. 20, 21). It is true that Christ, in a very special sense, is the King and Head of Zion, but it is no less true that, in a very important sense, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Standing in so important a relation to the Church, it is on her behalf that He takes to Himself this universal power and reigns. Holding this appointment from the Father, Christ is now exalted to the right hand of glorious power and majesty in the heavens. There He is seated on the throne, and wears the crown and sways the sceptre of universal dominion, and we are assured that all kings shall yet fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. But where, it is asked, is the practical importance or application of this truth? We look abroad upon the world, and we see many nations and peoples who have never been brought to the knowledge of the truth, and who are therefore ignorant of the homage which they owe to Christ. We still say the truth is here, and must remain for ever. It remains not only an unchanging truth in the Word, but shall yet become an accomplished fact in the history of every nation. What a blessed theme is here set before us for our contemplation! The kings of earth no more combining and conspiring against the Lord and His anointed, but coming with Christian loyalty to pay their tribute at the feet of King Jesus (Phil. ii. 10, 11). The fulfilment of these words may be in the far distant future, but of their certainty we are assured by prophecy already fulfilled in the history of those nations that had to make way for the coming of Christ. II. DUTIES DEVOLVING ON NATIONS UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST. 1. Christian nations are bound to frame their laws in accordance with the Word of God. Every nation ought to act according to that degree of religious knowledge which it may possess. The very claims of morality and justice, the best interests of society, the welfare of kings and rulers and of all classes of their subjects, and the claims of God, the Moral Governor, demand that

the laws of nations should be regulated by the Word. Was the law to be honoured under the Old Testament dispensation by one solitary nation under a theocratic government, much more shall it be honoured under the New, by many nations under many forms of civil government, but all subordinate to Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. By obedience to the laws of the King eternal shall righteousness be promoted, and righteousness exalteth a nation. 2. Christian nations are to be interested in the advancement of Christ's spiritual kingdom. III. BY WAY OF IMPROVEMENT OF THE SUBJECT, LET US SEE ITS GREAT IMPORTANCE. 1. It is of the highest importance, because it is frequently and clearly revealed in the Word. Its certainty does not rest on a few solitary passages of Scripture, but large and consecutive portions are employed to describe the power and glory of Christ, the King of nations. 2. It has been important in the past history and contentings of the Church. 3. Nor is the truth of less importance in the present day. The Kingship of Christ over the nations has become a present truth. There is undoubtedly a spirit abroad in the land in opposition to it. Men in Church and State have condemned the very principle. 4. But in a word, it is of growing importance. It will become still more important when its certainty has been established and its application fully and gloriously carried out. As we have already seen, it is frequently the theme of prophecy. And so, fathers and brethren, believing as we do in the faithfulness of God and in the fulfilment of His Word, we must believe His own prediction—"In His times He shall show who is blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." The works of nature, the discoveries of science, the achievements of art, the efforts of earth's mightiest nations and of the Church universal, shall yet combine to promote the interests of King Jesus. And in prospect of this happy period, shall we say the subject is of no importance? If we are to be indifferent to it, what is to become of the Church's prayer, "Thy kingdom come,"? (*C. S. Findlay.*)

*Christ's kingly office* :—I. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE. 1. It is not simply as God, but as Mediator—as God-man—that Christ executes the kingly office, and exercises supreme dominion, and is entitled to the profoundest homage and the most implicit submission. Christ's kingship as Mediator is different from His eternal and unchangeable dominion as God, and rests upon a different foundation. We are to regard Christ's kingly office as properly and fully developed at the time when God raised Him up, and gave Him glory, and seated Him at His own right hand. Christ has been invested with the uncontrolled administration of the moral government of the world. He exerts and displays His kingly power—(1) by subduing His people unto Himself; (2) by ruling and defending them; (3) by restraining and confining their enemies, who set themselves in opposition to the accomplishment of His purposes. II. PRACTICAL APPLICATION. To receive Christ in His different offices is just to act in the manner in which the contemplation of Him in His different characters is fitted to lead us to adopt. Advert to the encouraging and consolatory reflections which the contemplation of Christ's supreme dominion is fitted to call forth with reference to the general state of His visible Church, and the interests of religion in the world. (*W. Cunningham, D.D.*)

*The King and the kingdom* :—I. THE CHARACTER OF THIS KING. 1. His sovereignty; as appears from prophecy, types, titles, enemies, and strangers. 2. His attestations of royalty; His enthronement, throne, coronation, sceptre, laws, courts, officers, power, and His universal sway. 3. His characters and qualifications. An ancient, wise, righteous, gracious, sympathising, rich, present, invisible and immortal, independent, warlike, glorious King. II. THE KINGDOM. "My holy hill of Zion." It denotes a place of safety; a place of society, of unity, of commerce; a free, orderly, peaceable, warlike, beautiful kingdom. It is called Christ's kingdom, because He dwells there; He built it; He governs it; it is His property, and the inhabitants are His. III. WHY THE FATHER CONSTITUTED CHRIST THE KING OF HIS ZION. This springs out of His sovereign love to Him; to advance His own glory; to save His own people. Because Christ could sustain it, and when lost He redeemed it. IV. THE IMPROVEMENT INTENDED. 1. To the inhabitants. Follow the example of your Prince. Trust your all in His care. Constantly surround His throne. Rejoice in His presence. Obey His commandments; and rest always in His love. 2. To His enemies. You oppose Him, but He will subdue you. You reject Him and He will reject you. You are miserable in this life, and will be in the next, unless His Spirit gain the victory over you. (*T. B. Baker.*)

*Christ's kingdom* :—Jesus is King as well as Saviour. He requires subjects. They must know something of the nature, as well as the duties, of His kingdom. Two important questions call for considera-



tion: What are the characteristics of Christ's kingdom, and what relation do we individually sustain toward it? I. CHRIST'S KINGDOM ENJOYS THE APPROVAL AND SANCTION OF GOD. He declares, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Jesus comes to the throne in an orderly way. He is no usurper. He rules in harmony with the will, and by "the decree" of Him who is Lord of all. II. CHRIST IS KING BY INHERITANCE. He is God's "Son," His "only begotten Son," and so is entitled to rule. III. CHRIST, AS KING, PROCLAIMS HIS AUTHORITY: "The Lord hath said." He administers the affairs of government as one divinely endowed. He is Divine, and so possessed of omniscience and omnipotence. IV. HIS IS AN EXTENSIVE KINGDOM: "The heathen," or the nations, "are given Him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." V. HIS IS A JUDICIAL, AS WELL AS A SAVING, KINGDOM: His enemies shall be broken with "a rod of iron," and dashed "to pieces like a potter's vessel," which, made of clay, cannot withstand forced contact with the hard ground. VI. EARTH'S FORCES ANTAGONISE CHRIST'S KINGDOM. 1. The heathen rise up in opposition to it. 2. It is subject to popular machinations for its overthrow. 3. Men in high station and leaders in public opinion conspire against it. VII. CHRIST'S IS A VICTORIOUS KINGDOM. "The Lord" and His "anointed," or the Messiah, are independent of hostile agencies. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall have them in derision." He, however, gives them reminders of His presence and power, speaking at times to "them in His wrath," and at other times vexing "them in His sore displeasure." A kingdom so Divine, so potential, so extensive, and so gracious is not to be treated with indifference. It bears upon every person in the wide universe of God. It concerns man's weal or woe. Its proper consideration demands of us personally—1. Wise action. 2. Due enlightenment. 3. Judicious service. 4. Considerate delight. 5. Timely subjection. 6. Implicit trustfulness. (*H. M. Patterson, D.D.*) *The King in Zion*:—The following points determine the principal features of the picture which the Psalmist draws for us. In the centre is the King of Zion. All around Him is the raging crowd of rebels and conspirators, who have set themselves against high heaven, and who will overturn His throne if they can do it. In His struggle with these enemies of righteousness He is to exercise a double power: a power of blessing and a power of condemnation. By the exercise of this dual power He is at length to conquer completely. It does not require a very vivid imagination to find in the history of the past eighteen hundred years the colours and the figures which are wanting to fill out, in part at least, this prophetic sketch of the progress of Christ's kingdom here upon earth. Take, for example, the conflict which Christ has been waging against evil. It is evident that the Church has emerged from her darkest days into the first clear shining of her millennial glory. How has the King in Zion achieved His triumph? He was endowed at the outset with a power to bless and a power to destroy. His office was to be not only that of a Saviour King, but a kingly Judge. This is the dual character in which they who look for His second coming have always expected He would appear. With Christ came a new sense of sin and evil. Christ flashes His light into the soul, and there comes the discrimination between the good the bad. We are receiving approval or condemnation for every act done in the body now. The parable of the sheep and the goats is being enacted now, every day. Judgment is one of the most solemn facts of this present life. (*C. A. Dickinson.*) *The enemies of Christ*:—I. THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST. Great men described here partly from their wickedness, and partly from their weakness. They imagine vain things, but cannot carry them out. II. CHRIST THE LORD. The prophet brings in God the Father speaking, and the Son answering. The words of the Father are, "I have set My King"; where we have the inauguration of Christ, or His calling to the crown: the answer of the Son, "I will preach the law," which sets forth His willing obedience to publish and proclaim the laws of the kingdom: the reply of the Father, containing the reward that Christ was to have upon the publication of the gospel; which was an addition to His empire, by the conversion and access of the Gentiles, and the confusion of His enemies. III. ADMONITION TO THE PRINCES AND JUDGES OF THE EARTH. What are they taught? To know their duty, and to do it. And the time for doing it is now. The reason is double, drawn from His wrath and the consequent punishment, and from the happy condition of those who learn to know Him, and fear, and serve, and adore Him. (*William Nicholson.*) *Christ the fulfilment of prophecy*:—On an artist's table some colours are lying. You glance at them, and that is all, for to you they have no meaning. A month after you come in, and you are attracted by a beautiful picture. The picture has been painted with



the colours you saw before, but how different it is now when they are harmoniously blended. So Jesus Christ gathers into harmony in Himself the before ill-understood prophecies and types of the Old Testament; only then we see what they fully mean. *Christ the King*.—Dean Stubbs says, "When I was in Florence a year or two ago I saw on the outside of the town hall the sacred monogram, marking the spot where in former days were the words, 'Jesus Christ, appointed by the Senate the King of the Florentines.' And on the battlements of the tower I could still read the Latin inscription referring to the same event, 'Jesus Christ, the King of Glory; He conquers, He reigns, He rules.'" By a solemn civic act the old Florentines chose Christ as the King of their city, and we shall never know personal, social, or civic progress until we too give Him the pre-eminence.

Ver. 7. **I will declare the decree.**—*The Lord's decree*.—There is nothing in the economy of life and civilisation that is haphazard. Before all things and round about them as a glory and defence is the Lord's "decree." Under all disorder is law. The law is first beneficent, and then retributive. It is beneficent because it contemplates the recovery and sanctification of the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth. It is retributive because if this offer of enclosure and honour is rejected, those who despise it shall be broken with a rod of iron, and dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. In the study of the world's constitution and movement, look first of all at the Lord's "decree," the Lord's idea and purpose. Settle it that the decree is good, merciful, redemptive, and then judge everything in the light of that fact. If you were judging of a national constitution you would not pronounce it bad because of its prisons; you would, on the contrary, pronounce it good for that very reason. You would know that there was a strong authority in that land, and that the authority was good, because it imprisoned and rebuked the workers of evil. So the rod of iron attests the holiness of God, and hell itself shows that virtue is honoured of heaven. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) **The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son.**—*Demonstration of sonship*.—At the beginning of the Book of Psalms God gave to the Church a vision of the triumphs of Messiah before that of His sufferings and death. The prospect cheers as we enter the gloom. "My King" was also "My Son." This was determined by the resurrection, as the crowning act of redemption. It was the resurrection which made manifest to the world that Jesus of Nazareth was the Eternal Son of Jehovah. I. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BLESSED LORD WAS THE FINAL ATTESTATION OF HIS DIVINE MISSION, AND IN ONE SENSE THE STRONGEST. Proof after proof was afforded that He was the Son of God; but without the resurrection the chain of evidence was not complete. The life was restored, not through the instrumentality of a prophet, but because He was the Son of God. II. THE RESURRECTION IS THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. The disciples were scattered by the storm of the crucifixion. The dispersion would have been final had it not been for the word He had said, "The third day He shall rise again." A new departure was taken at the sight of the living Lord. The commission of the apostles was given in the light of the resurrection. They were to be accompanied by both His power and His presence. There must be the living Christ in the sermon, to make the truth effectual; in the ordinances, to render them spiritual; in the services, to inspire them into life; and in the conduct, to cause its light to shine on a dark world. III. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BLESSED LORD IS THE CHRISTIAN'S STRENGTH AND HOPE. A very exalted conception of redemption should be entertained. It is the gift of God to the Eternal Son. When the living Saviour is at our side we have power to carry our burdens, and to resist the devil. (*Weekly Pulpit.*) *Preaching the law*.—I. THE GENERAL MATTER OF THE SERMON. It is a law. What manner of law? A law to be preached, as other laws used not to be. A law concerning what God said. Which is the reason why it is to be preached. Not a law at large, but a statute law (*Elchok*), which but by publishing none can take notice of. II. THE TEXT ITSELF. Or the body of the law. In these words, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." The points in it are five. Of a son. Of My Son, (that is) the Son of God. Genui, the Son of God begotten. Hodie, the Son of God this day begotten. And "dixit genui," (that is) "dicendo genui," begotten only by saying. Only said the word and it was done, and the word became flesh. III. HOW CAN THIS (THOU ART MY SON) BE CALLED A LAW? It does not look like one. There be but two laws—1. *Lex fidei*; a law limiting what to believe of Him: of His person, His nature, and His offices. 2. *Lex factorum*; setting out first, what He doth for us; and then, what we are to do for Him. What He doth for us is, convey all filial

rights. What we are to do for Him is, return to Him all filial duties. (*Bishop Andrewes.*)

Ver. 8. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance.—*The Church aroused to the missionary work:—*1. THE LORD'S INTERCESSION, IN REFERENCE TO MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE. The great object of missionary enterprise is the subject of our Saviour's intercession. The object is the diffusion of the knowledge of Christianity throughout the world; that by means of the knowledge of Christianity, accompanied by the influence of the Divine Spirit, mankind of all nations may be converted to the faith and obedience of Christ, and be made wise, and happy, and good through Him. It is but natural to suppose that what was the leading design of our Lord in becoming incarnate, and suffering, and dying should be a subject of His intercessory prayers. Missionary enterprise, in the grand means by which these objects are to be effected, is one of the principal subjects of our Lord's intercessions. Secondary means are varied; the primary means is the Divine influence. In proportion to the degree in which this is communicated, missionary enterprise is prosperous; in proportion to the degree in which it is withheld, it languishes. And the communication of Divine influence was a leading object of our Lord's atonement, and must be a leading subject of His intercession.

II. THE DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE OF MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE. It is a clear proof of the estimation in which our Lord holds missionary enterprise, that it is the subject of constant intercession with His Father. In endeavouring to promote missionary enterprise we are doing something that is very pleasing to our Lord and Saviour. We may be sure that we shall have all the assistance that is necessary in order to perform our duty in reference to this undertaking. And the fact of our Lord's intercession gives us the most abundant assurance that this undertaking will ultimately be completely successful. (*John Brown, A.M.*) *Prayer glorified by Christ's example:—*It became Jesus to ask. Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience. Many objections are made to prayer. Some of them are specious, but all are founded on ignorance. The best way to meet them is to take our stand on the Scriptures. God did not dispense with prayer, even in the case of His Son. Therefore, how much more not with us. But how was He to ask? On earth He prayed like us. In heaven He continues His prayer. And here, through His people, He prays. And His prayers and ours rest on His atonement. Therefore He asks in His own name, and we in His. Let us be encouraged to pray. But let our prayers lead us to active endeavour. We cannot labour in vain. (*W. Jay.*) *The heathen for Christ:—*Here is a wonderful donation. The giver is Jehovah, the receiver is the world's Redeemer, and the gift is the heathen world—mighty populations lying outside of the Judæan realm. What an inheritance is this, and it is given to Christ! I. This vast inheritance is given Him to CULTIVATE. 1. This inheritance is worth cultivation. It is most prolific, its potential value is immense. It will grow the highest wisdom and the noblest virtues. Sages, poets, orators, apostles lie there by millions. 2. The cultivation of this inheritance has been sadly neglected. The fences are destroyed, the surface is crusted and overrun with thorns and thistles and noxious weeds. 3. Christ alone is able to cultivate it. Others have tried, but failed. Christ gives to the soul of heathendom that which it wants, and that which none other can give—1. A Deity in which all hearts can unite in supreme love. 2. A creed in which all intellects can repose with unwavering confidence. 3. A law which all consciences can approve without suspicion. 4. An enterprise in which all souls can work without hesitancy or lack of interest. II. This vast inheritance is given Him to ENJOY. It is a possession of immense value. It will be His as the reward of His mediatorial work. When its vast wildernesses will bloom as Edens, "He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." What a joy will be His! Think of the joy of the husbandman surveying in autumn his fields bearing the richest crops of golden grain. Think of the joy of the patriot when he beholds the rebellious provinces bowing again in loyalty to the sovereignty of his country. Think of the joy of the philanthropist in seeing his benevolent efforts crowned with success in the removal of diseases that afflict the body or tyrannies that crush the man. (*Homilist.*) *Christ's inheritance:—*I. CHRIST IS DECREED TO BE THE SON OF JEHOVAH. As such He is both Priest and King. "Christ toward us," says Gurnall, "acts as a King, but toward His Father as a Priest." II. AS THE SON HE IS PROMISED AN INHERITANCE. This inheritance includes all the nations of the earth. III. But though He is a King and has a promised inheritance, YET HIS GOVERNMENT IS TO BE ESTABLISHED BY THE USE OF MEANS. 1. These means are

the means of grace. 2. These are to be offered to every creature on the earth. 3. We live in that epoch of the world's history when the Church is actively engaged in having all men reconciled to the Son through the preaching of the gospel. IV. THE TIME WILL COME WHEN HIS ENEMIES WILL BE SUBDUED. 1. The Church, therefore, should be diligent in the performances of its present duties. 2. The world should heed the offers of grace ere it be too late. 3. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. 4. Let us wait upon God in prayer for the fulfilment of His promise to give the Son the heathen for His inheritance. (*L. O. Thompson.*) **The uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.**—*Final triumph of Christianity*:—This assured—I. BY THE PROMISES OF THE BIBLE, which are many, explicit, positive, and world-embracing. II. BY THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY. Christianity is on trial; if it fails to fulfil its promises, then it will be demonstrated that it is not of God. III. BY THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS WHICH IT HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED. There is nothing comparable with it. It saves "the chief of sinners." It transforms savages, demons, into saints. Christianity thus stands committed to the achievement of universal dominion. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Prayer for missions*:—I believe I am speaking to the right people when I ask you to pray. Unprayed for, I feel very much as if a diver were sent down to the bottom of a river with no air to breathe, or as if a fireman were sent up to a blazing building and held an empty hose; I feel very much as a soldier who is firing blank cartridge at an enemy, and so I ask you earnestly to pray that the gospel may take saving and working effect on the minds of those men to whose notice it has been introduced by us. (*James Gilmour.*) *Universal dominion of Christ*:—The boldest thought ever suggested to the human mind is Christ's proposition to convert this world to Himself. For originality of conception, simplicity of method, and certainty of result it has no parallel in the world of thought. Bolder than the dream of the Macedonian to conquer all kingdoms by his sword, than the purpose of the Roman to unify all governments into one, than the hope of Leibnitz to create a universal language for this our babbling race, it stands forth sublime in its isolation, to excite our admiration, inflame our zeal, invite our co-operation, and inspire our faith in the future of mankind. (*J. P. Newman.*)

Ver. 9. **Break them with a rod of iron.**—*Jehovah's iron rod*:—This cannot mean that Messiah's sway is a kingdom of force, but only that His enemies can no more withstand His power than an earthen vessel can withstand the blows of an iron rod. His only weapons of assault are truth and love; and if human power and institutions crumble at their touch and pass away, it is because there is something radically evil and defective in them. The northern oceans are often filled with mountains of ice, reaching not only far down into the deep, but towering also to the very clouds, and threatening to crush to atoms everything with which they come into collision. Nevertheless, how soon do a few days of the light and heat of the sun rob them of their strength, leaving the frailest barque to speed on its way over unobstructed waters! It is in this way that the Sun of Righteousness operates. By light and heat and truth and love He clears the way over the frozen oceans of human life, for the onward progress of the ark of His salvation to the haven where it would be. The only way in which Messiah can be said to break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, is His leaving them to the natural and fearful destruction that flows from resisting truth and love, the two great laws of His kingdom, and indeed the two great laws of all well-being. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) **Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.**—*The power and triumph of the kingdom of Christ*:—All things are at God's disposal—all nations, all men, collectively and individually. It is God who plants and destroys; it is He who builds up and pulls down. We learn from the Psalm that all things are at the disposal of God the Son. God the Father has given to Him the heathen for His inheritance, . . . and He shall break them with a rod of iron, He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. In Isaiah it is said (chap. lx. 12), "For the nation and kingdom that shall not serve Thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." The Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans would not serve God, and they have perished. Kingdoms which will not serve Christ must be destroyed to make way for those who will serve Him. The kingdom of Christ will, sooner or later, swallow up all other kingdoms. The power of Christ's kingdom, the power of His Word, is in a measure conferred upon His believing people. Christ has given to His believing people great power and influence in the earth. The Word of God is powerful; it is irresistible. If the



Word of God be once deeply rooted in the hearts of a people it there abideth for ever. God has wonderfully shielded England from danger ever since His Word became deeply rooted in the land. God breaks the power of ungodly nations that He may break men's hearts of stone. He destroys the kingdoms of this world in order to establish and enlarge the kingdom of His dear Son. To change the heart is the work of God. He must go with the missionaries. But much depends on our faith—our faith in God's promises. (*R. Bickerdike, M.A.*) *The powers of evil broken*.—Rods of iron crashing down upon the heads of men, dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel, are figures of speech that seem to be very unlike the merciful methods of entreaty and persuasion by which Christ's kingdom is advanced on the earth; but we have need to remember that the Saviour is also the Judge. Not only in the future world, but also in this, history shows that the fate of nations has been determined by their attitude to Christ. While with individuals force is never to be employed as an instrument to conquer opposition, it is equally certain that in the providence of God antagonism to God's will inevitably leads a nation ultimately to its destruction. Though the hand that smites it is hidden behind political movements, in which perhaps nothing can be seen save the passions of men urging them into conflict, yet when the smoke of the battlefield has rolled away, and the strife has ended, there stands out this great truth: "Thou dashest them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Nothing that sets itself against the Christ of God can ever last. (*E. R. Barrett, B.A.*)

**Ver. 10. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings.—Heavenly wisdom:**—Wisdom is the mind's eye, by which she pryeth into all the secrets of nature and mysteries of State, and discerneth between good and evil, and prudently guideth all the affairs of life, as the helm doth a ship. She is the chief of the four cardinal virtues; and may rightly be termed the hinge that turns them all about. There are these four virtues—wisdom to direct, justice to correct, temperance to abstain, fortitude to sustain. Wisdom giveth a good relish to virtue. Discretion is the salt of all our actions, without which nothing that is done or spoken is savoury. What doth pregnancy of wit, or maturity of judgment, or felicity of memory, or variety of reading, or multiplicity of observation, or gracefulness of delivery, speed a man that wanteth wisdom and discretion to use them? In Scriptures a fourfold wisdom is mentioned. Godly wisdom is piety. Worldly wisdom is policy. Fleshly wisdom is sensuality. Devilish wisdom is mischievous subtlety. Of this heavenly light, this godly wisdom, we will display four beams—1. To begin with our end, and to provide for our eternal estate after this life, in the first place. 2. To inform ourselves certainly how we stand in the court of heaven: whether God's countenance shine upon us, or there be a cloud betwixt it and us. 3. To consider what infirmities or maladies of mind our natural constitution, state, place, or profession, or course of life maketh us most subject unto, and to furnish ourselves with store of remedies against them. To mark where we lie most open to temptation, and there to have our watch ready. 4. To observe the carriage of all affairs in this great city of the world, and to set a mark upon God's wonderful protection and care over the godly, and His fearful judgments upon the wicked. (*D. Featley, D.D.*)

**Ver. 11. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.—Antagonistic forces:**—The scientist tells us that the laws of nature are arranged on the principle of antagonistic forces; and it is somewhat thus with the laws of the Christian life. I. THE TWO STATES OF FEELING REFERRED TO. 1. Fear. There are two kinds, servile and filial. The latter is indicated here. A noble sensitiveness, an anxious consciousness, a salutary apprehensiveness. 2. "And rejoice with trembling," that is, with diffidence. II. THESE TWO STATES OF FEELING ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE. They are only apparently so. How often in nature contradictory materials and forces blend—hydrogen and oxygen, nitrogen and oxygen. Attraction and repulsion are really complementary, and not contradictory. III. THEY ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. They not only may, but ought, to exist together. 1. We ought to fear. The brighter the star the more it trembles. 2. And we ought to rejoice. "Fear without joy is torment, and joy without holy fear would be presumption." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The reverence due to Divine Providence:*—Fear, very necessary for us all. Yet not inordinate fear. Religion regulates it and God's Word cautions us against superstitious terrors (*Jer. x. 2, 3*). But we are to take notice of what He does and learn His will thereby. Many fail to do this by the common events of His providence; hence



special and extraordinary ones are, at times, sent to us. Men avoid the lessons of them. They say, "They did not do us harm." But others may come and destroy you. And is not the fact of such forbearance a reason for not despising them? "But they are natural," say others. And are not life and death natural? Terror alone is of no use, but generally the first motive of reformation. "But our dangers do not proceed from our sins: we are no worse than others"—so speak some. Are we sure that we are not greater sinners than others? Think of our national sins. Some would fly away from God's judgments. Fly from your iniquities if you would be safe. Some are afraid to express their convictions lest the world despise them. But take care lest our Lord's words concerning them who deny Him before men apply to you. You are not called to forsake your proper duties, nor even relaxations, but your absorption in these things. Fear not man. The good will not shun you. Let the rest do so. Examine your state of heart. All is well if that be right with God. If not, humble yourself before Him. (*T. Secker.*) *Divine service*.—I. THE UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION. "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." We cannot even die without affecting others, much less can we live without influencing to a greater or less degree the condition and character of those by whom we are surrounded. This is not merely a fact, it is a law. There may be individual unwillingness, as in the case of a miser; or the principle may be socially counter-wrought. All classes unite in working for the common good; knowing it or not, whether they be willing or not, all serve the state-unity which they compose. In the language of the text, the business of all created life is to "serve the Lord." II. PARTICULAR OBEDIENCE. 1. To serve God consciously. 2. To serve God reverently. Think how great and how good a Master! Our particular place and work may be humble; yet the whole is sublime. Angels, free from all distraction in the sinless world, are working at the grander parts; our work and theirs are yet to be brought together. Ours, therefore, must be our very best, or better be left undone. 3. To serve God fearfully. As having failed, and yet having been forgiven. As having promised better things, and yet as knowing ourselves weak; and finally, as bearing in mind the testing-time. (*J. M. Stott, M.A.*) *Christian reverence*.—In a Christian's course fear and love must go together. In heaven, love will absorb fear. No one now can love God aright without fearing Him. Self-confident men, who do not know their own hearts, or the reasons they have for being dissatisfied with themselves, do not fear God, and they think this bold freedom is to love Him. Deliberate sinners fear, but cannot love Him. But devotion to Him consists in love and fear, as we may understand from our ordinary attachment to each other. No one really loves another who does not feel a certain reverence towards him. It is mutual respect which makes friendship lasting. So again in the feelings of inferiors towards superiors. Fear must go before love. Till he who has authority shows he has it and can use it, his forbearance will not be valued truly: his kindness will look like weakness. We learn to condemn what we do not fear, and we cannot love what we condemn. So in religion also. We cannot understand Christ's mercies till we understand His power, His glory, His unspeakable holiness, and our demerits; that is, until we first fear Him. Not that fear comes first, and then love; for the most part they will proceed together. Fear is allayed by the love of Him, and our love sobered by our fear of Him. Thus He draws us on with encouraging voice amid the terrors of His threatenings. Are we in danger of speaking or thinking of Christ irreverently? We may not be in danger of deliberate profaneness, but we are in danger of this, namely, of allowing ourselves to appear profane, and of gradually becoming irreverent while we are pretending to be so. Careless language cannot be continued without its affecting the heart at last. Men become the cold, indifferent, profane characters they professed themselves to be. (*J. H. Newman, B.D.*) *Rejoice with trembling*.—*The mixture of joy and fear in religion*.—Joy and fear are two great springs of human action. The mixed condition of this world gives scope for both. Each of them possesses a proper place in religion. Under the present imperfection of human nature each of these principles may be carried to a dangerous extreme. When the whole of religion is placed in joy it is in hazard of rising into unwarrantable rapture. When it rests altogether on fear it degenerates into superstitious servility. Joy tempered with fear is the proper disposition of a good man. I. JOY IS ESSENTIAL TO RELIGION. Religion inspires joy. It confers the two most material requisites of joy, a favourable situation of things without and a proper disposition of mind within. It infuses those mild and gentle dispositions whose natural effect is to smooth the temper of the soul. Benevolence and candour, moderation and temperance, wherever they reign, produce cheerfulness

and serenity. The consciousness of integrity gives ease and freedom to the mind. As religion inspires joy, so what it inspires it commands us to cherish. Religious obedience, destitute of joy, is not genuine in its principle. We serve with pleasure the benefactor whom we love. Exclude joy from religion and you leave no other motives to it, except compulsion and interest. As religion destitute of joy is imperfect in its principle, so in practice it must be unstable. In vain you endeavour to fix any man to the regular performance of that in which he finds no pleasure. Bind him ever so fast by interest or fear, he will contrive some method of eluding the obligation. Estimate, therefore, the genuineness of your religious principles; estimate the degree of your stability in religious practice, by the degree of your satisfaction in piety and virtue. II. WHEN WE REJOICE WE SHOULD REJOICE WITH TREMBLING. 1. Because all the objects of religion which afford ground for joy tend to inspire, at the same time, reverence and fear. 2. As joy, tempered by fear, suits the nature of religion, so it is requisite for the proper regulation of the conduct of man. Let his joy flow from the best and purest source, yet, if it remain long unmixed, it is apt to become dangerous to virtue. It is wisely ordered in our present state that joy and fear, hope and grief should act alternately as checks and balances upon each other, in order to prevent all excess in any of them which our nature could not bear. 3. The unstable condition of all human beings, naturally inspires fear in the midst of joy. Vicissitudes of good and evil, of trials and consolations, fill up man's life. Whether we consider life or death, time or eternity, all things appear to concur in giving to man the admonition of the text, "rejoice with trembling." (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.**—*The symbol of the kiss.*—I. OUR DUTY. "Kiss the Son." An expression of love. To whom? The Son of God. The testimony of our love to this person is the kiss. This outward act has been diversely depraved and vitiated amongst men. It hath been ill-used. See cases of Joab with Amasa, and Judas with Christ. Treachery often, but licentiousness more, hath depraved this seal of love; and yet God stoops even to the words of our foul and unchaste love, that thereby He might raise us to the heavenly love of Himself and His Son. In innocent and harmless times persons near in blood did kiss one another. There is no person so near of kin to thee as Jesus Christ. The kiss was also in use as a recognition of sovereignty and power. There is the kiss of reconciliation. They kissed in reverence, in the olden times, even false gods. II. OUR FEAR. "Lest He be angry." Anger and love, in God, are not incompatible. Anger consists with love. If God gave me nothing for my love I should not love Him, nor fear Him if He were not angry at my displeasing Him. Even the Son, whom we may kiss, may be angry. (*John Donne.*) *An earnest invitation.*—I. THE COMMAND. A kiss has divers meanings in it, progressive meanings—1. It is a kiss of reconciliation, a sign of enmity removed and of peace established. 2. A kiss of allegiance and homage. It is an Eastern custom for subjects to kiss the feet of the king. Christ requires of every man who would be saved that he shall yield to His government and rule. Salvation cannot be cut in twain. If you would have justification you must have sanctification too. If your sins are pardoned they must be abhorred. You must give Him the kiss of fealty, of homage, and loyalty, and take Him to be your King. 3. It is the kiss of worship. It was the custom for idolaters to kiss the god which they foolishly adored. The commandment is that we should give to Christ Divine worship. 4. There is another meaning which is the sweetest of all. It is the kiss of penitent love; of deep and sincere affection. II. THE ARGUMENT. "Lest He be angry," &c. When He is angry it is anger that none can match. What a fearful conjunction of terms—"the wrath of the Lamb." III. THE BENEDICTION. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." 1. They are really blessed. It is no fiction, no imaginary blessing. It is a blessing that will stand the test of consideration, the test of life and the trial of death. 2. They have a conscious blessedness. They know what it is to be blessed in their troubles, for they are in their trials comforted; and they are blest in their joys, for their joys are sanctified. 3. They are increasingly blessed. Their blessedness grows. They are blessed the more their experience widens, and their knowledge deepens, and their love increases. They are blessed in the hour of death, and best of all their blessedness increases to eternal blessedness—the perfection of the saints at the right hand of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A timely remonstrance.*—The words were spoken to those who had wilfully opposed the reign of our Saviour, the Son of God, the Lord's anointed. They had determined to reject Him. Hence

the warning—"Be wise now, therefore ; be instructed ; do listen a little." Every wise man, before he commits himself to defend or withstand a policy, would make quite sure, as far as human judgment can, whether it be right or wrong ; to be desired or to be deprecated. These words were spoken to those who ought to have been wise—to kings and judges of the earth. We are none of us so wise but we may profit by a little more instruction. He that cannot learn from a fool is a fool himself. The text has an especial reference to those who are thoughtless and careless about their best interests. People do not think. Some of them hold to the religion of their ancestors, whatever that may be. Not conviction, but tradition shapes their ends. Others are of the religion of the circle in which they live. Man seems to think of everything but of his God, to read everything but his Bible. Oh, when will men consider ? The advice given in the text is—"rebel no more against God." You have done so some of you, actively and wilfully, others of you by ignoring His claims and utterly neglecting His will. It is not right to continue in this rebellious state. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Here is the pith of the advice—"Kiss the Son, pay Him homage ; yield the affectionate fealty of your hearts to the Son of God." Between you and the great King there is an awful breach. God will deal with you through His Son. You must have an advocate. This advice is urgent. How is this advice pressed home upon us ! The vanity of any other course is made palpable. The claims of the Son are presented. The exhortation is backed up with bright and beautiful congratulations for those who yield to it. "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The soul's kiss* (to children):—The first three verses give a life-like picture of a great mob or riot. The kings of the earth become unkingly, and join the rabble against the Lord and His anointed. From the tenth verse Jehovah gives advice to all on the earth. I. WHAT IT IS TO KISS THE SON. When you kiss your mother it is a sign of love. When a friend brings you a present, you speak your thanks with a kiss. A kiss, then, is a sign of grateful love. A kiss is in some countries a sign of loyalty. In England the hand of the sovereign is kissed. To kiss the Son means much. You thereby give Him your all, and get it back with His goodwill. True loyalty is without selfishness, and without stint. Loyalty never means, how little can I do for my king ? It asks only how much ? II. WHY YOU SHOULD KISS THE SON. Because Christ's foes are under God's wrath. In this Psalm David shows us the terrors of God, so that fear may drive us to Him. And because Christ's friends are blessed. Blessed every way and blessed always. It is as plain as day that if all kissed the Son the most of our miseries would straightway cease. Count up all the ills of life, and then ask how many of them could continue if the Spirit of Christ ruled in every heart. But the true subjects of the King are not all blessed in the same way. God does promise that, come what may, all who kiss the Son shall be blessed. The curse and the blessing unite to add force to the appeal, "Kiss the Son." (*James Wells, M.A.*) *Christ's wrath kindled*:—You have heard of the prairie burning. The traveller has lit his fire and dropped a spark—the fire is kindled but a little, and a small circle of flame is formed. You cannot judge what will be the mighty catastrophe, when the sheet of flame shall cover half the continent. But mark that when it is kindled "but a little," it is enough to utterly destroy, for they shall perish from the way. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him*.—*The blessedness of trusting in God*:—Whether this Psalm has a primary respect to David, and the establishment of his kingdom on Mount Zion, or should be entirely referred to Messiah, is a point on which expositors are not agreed. The passage is quoted and expressly applied to Christ by the whole college of apostles, after they had received the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The act of trust is so familiar to all that it requires no explanation. Two things are implied in trusting. A conviction of need and a sense of dependence. A persuasion of the goodwill, ability, and fidelity of the person in whom we trust. The exercise of a saving faith is not more frequently expressed by any term than by trust. Man is so dependent on Providence for the common blessings of this life that trust in God for these is the state of mind which is becoming. In regard to spiritual and eternal blessings, our dependence is still greater ; for man has already lost the favour of God, and has fallen under His dreadful curse. The inability of his heart and will, so far from furnishing any excuse to the sinner, is the chief ground of his criminality. A threefold misery is common to all the children of Adam—blindness, deadness, guilt. To qualify himself as a physician to cure the threefold malady, Christ has assumed as Mediator a threefold office, namely—of a prophet, priest, and king ; and in this threefold office the sinner must trust in



Him for salvation. All men need a refuge to which they may flee for safety ; and happy are they who have been so made sensible of their danger and misery that they are anxiously seeking a place of safety. They cannot escape by their own wisdom or power, and no other creature has ability to rescue them from ruin. Whither, then, shall they turn ? There is no hope but in the gospel of salvation. Sin cannot escape punishment in the just government of a holy God. But sin may be punished in an adequate substitute. It has been punished in our Divine Surety. The satisfaction is complete. Trust in the Redeemer supposes that He has manifested in some way a willingness to save us. In order that trust have a firm foundation it is requisite that there should be explicit promises of relief. Such promises are especially necessary in the case of the sinner. We find the gospel full of kind invitations and gracious promises to all who will come and receive salvation as a free gift. The first views of faith are not always clear ; commonly the first light is like that of the dawn, which gradually increases. They who have once found Christ, and trusted in Him, however they may be tossed with temptations or distressed by doubts of their acceptance, never think of any refuge but Christ ; they never attempt to build on another foundation. The believer also trusts in Christ for future help and future good. As to the blessedness of those who trust in the Redeemer, we note—1. They have received the forgiveness of sin. 2. They have the indwelling of the Spirit of God. 3. They are the special care of Divine Providence. 4. They enjoy inward peace. 5. When they leave the world they shall be blessed in the open vision of God's glory. They shall be perfectly cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and when they shall see their Saviour they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. (*A. Alexander, D.D.*)

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### PSALM III.

VERS. 1-8. *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me.—Morning thoughts :* With returning day there comes back on the monarch's heart the recollection of the enemies who threaten him, a nation up in arms against him ; his own son heading the rebellion, his wisest and most trusted counsellor in the ranks of his foes (2 Sam. xv.-xvii.). Never, not even when hunted by Saul, had he found his position one of greater danger. The odds are overwhelmingly against him. This is a fact which he does not attempt to hide from himself : "How many are mine enemies." Meanwhile, where are his friends, his army, his counsellors ? Not a word of allusion to any of them in the Psalm. Yet he is not crushed, he is not desponding. Enemies may be as thick as leaves of the forest, and earthly friends may be few, or uncertain, or far off. But there is one Friend who cannot fail him, and to Him David turns with a confidence and an affection which lift him above all his fears. Never had he been more sensible of the reality and preciousness of the Divine protection. If he was surrounded by enemies, Jehovah was his shield. If Shimei and his crew turned his glory into shame, Jehovah was his glory ; if they sought to revile and degrade him, Jehovah was the lifter-up of his head. Nor did the mere fact of distance from Jerusalem separate between him and his God. He had sent back the ark and the priests, for he knew that God could still hear him from "His holy mountain" (iii. 4), could still lift up the light of His countenance upon him, and put gladness in his heart (iv. 6, 7). Sustained by Jehovah, he had lain him down and slept in safety ; trusting in the same mighty protection, he would lie down again to rest. Enemies might taunt, and friends might fail him, but the victory was Jehovah's, and He could break the teeth of the ungodly (iii. 7, 8). (*J. J. S. Perowne.*) *A morning hymn :*—The Psalm falls into four strophes ; three of which are marked by "Selah." 1. Vers. 1, 2 : The Psalmist recounts his enemies. As a morning Psalm this is touchingly true to experience. The first waking thought is often a renewed inrush of the trouble which sleep had for a time dammed back. His enemies are many, and they taunt him as forsaken of God. The Psalmist is finding refuge from fears and foes, even in telling how many there are, since he begins his complaint with "Jehovah." Without that word the exclamations of his first strophe are the voice of cowardice or despair. With it they are calmed into the appeal of trust. The Selah here is probably a direction for an instrumental interlude while the singer pauses. 2. Vers. 3, 4 : The utterance of faith, based on experience, laying hold of Jehovah as defence. By an effort of will

the Psalmist rises from the contemplation of surrounding enemies to that of the encircling Jehovah. This harassed man flings himself out of the coil of troubles round about him, and looks up to God. He sees in Him precisely what he needs at the moment, for in that infinite nature is fulness corresponding to all emptiness of ours. How comes this sudden burst of confidence to lighten the complaining soul? Ver. 4 tells. Experience has taught him that as often as he cries to Jehovah he is heard. The tenses in ver. 4 express a habitual act and a constant result. 3. Vers. 5, 6 beautifully express the tranquil courage that comes from trust. "Surrounded by enemies, he was quite safe under God's protection, and exposed to no peril even in the night." This suits the situation pointed to in the superscription of the Psalm. 4. Vers. 7, 8 give the culmination of faith in prayer. "Arise, Jehovah" is quoted from the ancient invocation (Num. x. 35), and expresses in strongly anthropomorphic form the desire for some interposition of Divine power. Fearlessness is not so complete that the Psalmist is beyond the need of praying. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The number of a man's foes* :—When a man's enemies increase in number the man should bethink himself, for surely they will not increase without reason. This is a matter which cannot be decided without careful consideration. It is no argument against a man that his enemies are millions strong, nor is it any argument in favour of a man that his friends are at least equal in number. At the same time, it may be spiritually educative and useful to consider why there are so many enemies. Enmity may be founded on jealousy, or envy, or opposition of conviction; or upon assurance that the individual against whom the enmity is directed is pursuing a mischievous course. It is for the man himself to retire within the sanctuary of his own conscience, to discover his moral purpose in everything, and, according as his integrity can be proved to stand fast even in solitude and desolation. But there is a self-analysis that is irreligious. It is conducted upon wrong principles, and the conductor of it is resolved upon self-vindication, rather than upon an absolute discovery of truth, be it on which side it may. It should be remembered, too, that there are some questions which cannot be decided in solitude, the help of social influence is necessary to modify the judgment and chasten the feeling of the inquirer. A second thought arising in this connection is that the very fact of the enemies being all but countless in number may be a tribute to a man's greatness. Armies are not sent to cut down mushrooms or bulrushes. The very magnitude of the host encamped against a man may say without words how great the man is and mighty, and how worthy of being attacked. To leave some men alone is to withhold from them every moral and intellectual tribute. The numbers of a man's enemies may be a tribute to the very greatness which they desire to modify or overthrow. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *A soul's complaint to God* :—I. AN ENUMERATION OF TROUBLE (1, 2). Though God knows all, it relieves the surcharged heart to tell all unto Him. The foes were "many." They quoted his sin as a reason for supposing that God had forsaken him (2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8). The word "help" is "salvation," which belongs only unto God. II. AN EXPRESSION OF UNFALTERING TRUST (3, 4). God our shield (Gen. xv. 1). It is a good thing to use the voice in prayer as our Lord did. Words keep the heart awake (Heb. v. 7). III. AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MERCY (5, 6). It was the perfection of trust to be able to sleep under such circumstances. But it is possible (Mark iv. 38; Acts xii. 6). If we are where we should be God will save us, if not from, then in our troubles. IV. AN URGENT ENTREATY. He counts his foes as wild beasts, harmless because their jaws are broken and their teeth dashed out. They may prowl around, but they cannot hurt. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The great trials of life* :—I. A GOOD MAN UNDER GREAT TRIAL. 1. It involved great dangers: the danger of losing his palace, throne, reputation, life. 2. It came from an unlikely source. From his own and favourite son. 3. It was morally deserved. He had committed heinous crimes. His guilty conscience added much to the weight of the trial which now befell him. II. AN ALL-SUFFICIENT FRIEND UNDER GREAT TRIAL. Here Jehovah is presented as—1. A protecting; 2. A glorifying; 3. A restoring; 4. A prayer-hearing; 5. A life-sustaining friend. III. A RIGHT MORAL TEMPER UNDER GREAT TRIAL. Two characteristics in David's temper at this time—(1) courage; (2) prayerfulness. David's whole soul seems to have gone out in this prayer, and in truth all true prayer is earnest. "As a painted fire," says a brilliant old writer, "is no fire, a dead man no man, so cold prayer is no prayer. In a painted fire there is no heat, in a dead man there is no life; so in a cold prayer there is no omnipotency, no devotion, no blessing. Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings. Cold prayers always freeze before they

reach heaven. As a body without a soul, much wood without fire, a bullet in a gun without powder, so are words in prayer without fervency of spirit." (*Homilist.*) *The via dolorosa*.—The title is, "A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son" (2 Sam. xv.-xviii.). I. NONE ARE EXEMPT FROM TROUBLE. The man who sorrows is a king, even David. All meet together in sorrow, for it is the lot of all. II. TROUBLES OFTEN COME IN TROOPS. "How are they increased that trouble me." So was it here with David, and so was it with Job. All sorrows are akin, and hence they come in crowds. III. OUR TROUBLE MAY BE OUR SIN FINDING US OUT. It was so with David here. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." IV. TROUBLE IS APT TO STAGGER OUR FAITH IN GOD. The enemy took advantage of David's troubles, and said to him, "God hath forsaken thee, and left thee." Men in trouble are prone to run into one of two extremes—despair or indifference. We are not to steel our hearts against chastening, for God means that we should feel it; nor, on the other hand, are we to faint. Doubt God's very existence sooner than His mercy. Plato defines suicide to be "a desertion of our post." We are to be like that Roman soldier who stood to his post in the sentry-box at Pompeii, when the scoriæ of Mount Vesuvius buried it with the city. V. THE POWER OF SUSTAINING GRACE UNDER AFFLICTION IS HERE SEEN. "I laid me down and slept." There are myriads to-day who are able to testify of "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." David in flight finds God his Shield and high Tower, though he has but six hundred men. Ahithophel at court, backed by an army of twelve thousand troops, is in despair, and hangs himself. God keep us from unsanctified affliction. (*E. S. Prout.*) *The harassed man*.—1. One element of the harassment is multitudinousness of trouble. A characteristic feature of the trouble-time with Absalom. 2. Another element is unkind and taunting speech. The cruel scoff—"no help for him in God"—cuts like a knife to the very centre of his personality. 3. Another element is a kind of internal despair. It sounds in the first sentences of the Psalm. What are the resources of the harassed man? Turning Godward. He flings himself out of the coil of troubles round about him, and looks up to God. The thought of God as possessing precisely what he, amid his harassments, needs. God is the three things he needs—"shield," or defence; "my glory"; and the "lifter up of my head," for God can both cheer the harassed man's spirit, and restore to him the consciousness of his own real dignity, notwithstanding his trials. I came upon the most beautiful illustration of all this the other day. One of those spiritual Christians, a Stundist as they call them in Russia, was standing amidst a lot of Russian criminals in the courtyard of a Russian prison, chained with them, and sentenced with them to Siberia for his faith's sake. His fellow-prisoners were jeering at him. "But you're no better off than we are. You are wearing the bracelets, as we do; if your God is of any use to you, why doesn't He knock off your chains and set you free?" The man replied reverently: "If the Lord will, He can set me free even now; and though my hands are chained, my heart is free." He was freed. But though he had been obliged to trudge the weary way to Siberia, for his free heart God would still have been shield, glory, the lifter up of the head. Calmness and courage can come to the harassed man. There is this possible mood for the harassed man—confident expectation. Salvation belongeth unto God; Thy blessing is upon Thy people." (*Homiletic Review.*) *Many are they that rise up against me.*—*The Psalmist's complaint*.—The superscription of the Psalm indicates the occasion of its composition (2 Sam. xv.). I. THE MAGNITUDE OF HIS COMPLAINT. It proceeds from a heart at once oppressed by the grievousness of its sorrows, and terrified at the number of its enemies. The severity of the trial is evident from its progressive character. He has adversaries who even blaspheme God, and insultingly say of His servant, "There is no help for him in God." The best men have many faults, and sin often appears sweet to them. So God suffers them to taste the unpalatable fruit of transgression; but He even extracts sweetness from its very bitterness, educing from chastisement amendment of life, and help heavenward. Good men flee to their heavenly Father in the day of trouble, and this fact shows that the very nature of punishment is transformed. II. THE NATURE OF HIS TRIAL. The Psalmist sighs over the extreme severity of his trials. But God never lays more upon His own children than they are able to bear. The sense of gracious support in the hour of trial is an evidence that God is assuaging grief and providing a way of escape from it. When the wicked are punished there is no such alleviation, nor any access to God. III. THE SOURCE OF HIS COMPLAINT. It does not proceed from mere human nature. The complaint originates with the Spirit of God, and with



that spirit of adoption which He sheds abroad in the heart. The son, conscious of his father's affection, expostulates in the midst of his chastisement. He even feels that God suffers with him, and is deeply affected by the trials which He Himself sends. We shall do well to imitate David's complaint in our time of trouble, ever seeking profoundly to realise God's love in Christ Jesus. (*Robert Rollocks.*)

**Ver. 2. There is no help for him in God.—Help in God:**—David had grieved God, and God had threatened to "raise up evil against him out of his own house." The threatening was fulfilled in the rebellion of Absalom. Then he seemed so helpless that, in the language of mockery and exultation, his enemies said, "There is no help for him in God." But David was not altogether cast down. He did not give way to despondency; he placed his confidence and found his refuge in the protection of Almighty God. From all he had been taught to believe, and from all that he had been privileged to feel respecting the ways of His providence, he was fully persuaded that light would rise out of darkness, and order out of confusion, and safety out of peril. Thus it should be with all who have that deep and enlightened piety by which David was distinguished. The time of affliction is the time for trying faith and patience, for manifesting the energy and perfection which belong to them, and for enjoying the consolation which they are so well fitted to impart. It matters not what your trials and your sorrows be; your support and your solacement remain unchangeably the same. The larger sorrows are as much within the reach of God's sovereign and absolute control as is the most inconsiderable evil that can possibly befall you. Suppose your distresses are the result of your transgression, still do not despond, or allow your confidence in God as your God to be impaired. You would have cause for despair if you hardened yourselves against Him, but none if you are penitent. He is neither vindictive nor relentless. Beholding you in the face of Jesus Christ, He becomes your Father, your Protector, and your Friend. Amidst all his sins and sufferings the Psalmist had recourse to the exercises of devotion. He retired into his secret chambers, or he went into the public sanctuary and addressed himself to God in prayer and supplication. To be successful in prayer we must seek in the appointed way, "out of His holy hill." Whatever be the evils we suffer, let this great truth be firmly believed in and constantly remembered—"Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) **Selah.** Vers. 2, 4, 8. **Stop and think:**—That seems to sum up the several meanings of the word "Selah." Some say it is a direction to the musicians to play an interlude while the singers ceased; some regard it as a direction to the players to stop and tune their instruments. Others see an injunction to raise heart and voice, harp and organ, to their fullest capacity. Others see a reference to eternity, as if one interposed, "World without end, Amen!" Many regard the word as equivalent to certain well-known signs in music, bidding you turn back and repeat. In any case, it is as if a solemn rock ("sela") stood right across our path, bidding us "stop and think." On the ground of this injunction meet all meanings, however divergent they seem. "No help for him in God." Stop and think. Selah looks forward as well as back. God has been a shield for David; He can also lift up his head once more, and invest him with glory, the sunshine of the Divine countenance. For us who conduct the services of God's house, "Selah" has a message. It bids the preacher rightly divide the word of truth. It bids him compare truth with truth, bringing out things new and old, and fixing each in its most telling place. It says—tune your hearts, voices, instruments. Seek inspiration, do justice to the Divine message and the gospel song, so that with holy passion, and sacred emphasis, and heart-felt pathos you shall lead our hearts to God, and incite our minds to things eternal. (*Michael Eastwood.*)

**Vers. 3-5. But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me.—A man's best confidence in trial:**—These verses show how much a man may have in reality when he seems to have absolutely nothing in appearance. David has described his estate as one of loneliness, amounting almost to utter desolation, so far as social relationships are concerned. He seems to be alone in the very midst of threatening and desperate enemies. His soul is mocked and his prayers are blown aside by the furious opposition of his pursuers. What, then, has David even in the midst of all this loss and peril and fear? He himself seems to give an inventory of his riches. 1. He has a sense of security. "Thou art a shield for me." The image of Divine protection under the type of a shield is of frequent occurrence in Scripture. 2. He has a sense of prayer. He describes God as the lifter up of his head: the meaning is,

that though sore driven he could still turn his eyes towards heaven, expectant of spiritual deliverance and benediction, and that even when his enemies were most heavily pressing upon him he was lifted up higher than any of them—a target to be shot at; but he knew that no arrow of the enemy could strike the head that was divinely sustained. 3. Then David points out the fact of his own enjoyment of the quietness and refreshment of sleep,—“I laid me down and slept.” An eye so critical as this could never be without an object of Divine care upon which to rest. We are too prone to think of God as only at the head of battles, and as leading great hosts in orderly procession; we forget that He giveth His beloved sleep, that He dries the tears of sorrow, and that He does about us the work of a servant, ministering to our life in patience and tenderness, and all bountifulness of love. The warrior who talks about a shield, and who rejoices in the lifting up of his head, recognises in sleep the benediction of God. God will never allow Himself to be excluded from what may be termed the more quiet and domestic spheres of life. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *My shield and my glory*:—This is a sweet song, and all the sweeter when we note the estate of the songster. Some circumstances set the sweetness of music in pronounced relief. It is the song that rises out of dreariness that exercises such a fascinating ministry. Look at the outside of the Psalmist's life. His external comfort was disturbed. His piety was questioned, and his fellowship with the Divine was denied. Man fails him. He retired more entirely upon God. In God he found that which transcended comfort, he found peace. In God he found that which transcended success, he found glory. In God he found that which transcended human regard, he found the approbation of the Divine. The figure of the shield is a beautiful one. It suggests the all-sufficient protection which comes from the companionship of God. The Lord will not permit my external circumstances to injure my spirit. The Lord will also be a shield against the foe within. When the circumstances are unfriendly, man is apt to become embittered. The hostility may nourish revenge. Failure may make a cynic. The winter-time may breed envy, malice, and uncharitableness. I need some defence against these foes within. “Man needs re-enforcing against his worse self.” I claim all the real protections as the ministry of the king. “My glory.” In the approbation of God I find my honour. The crown that man can give me, man can take away. God's crowns are worn not as external dignities, but as spiritual dignities which adorn the soul. . . . Men were unfriendly, circumstances were unsympathetic; this man “cried unto the Lord, and He heard him.” There was a constant festival of fellowship, of fruitful responsiveness between man and his God. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *God a shield*:—“Often,” says John Paton, during his early days on the island of Tauna, “often have I had to run into the arms of some savage when his club was swung, or musket levelled at my head, and so clung round him that he could neither strike nor shoot until his wrath had cooled down.” One day, while toiling away at his house, the war chief and a large party of armed men surrounded the plot where he was working. They all had muskets besides other weapons. They watched him for some time in silence, and then every one levelled his weapon at his head. Escape was impossible, speech useless. His eyesight went and came in a moment. He could do nothing but pray, and the text came into his mind, “Whatsoever ye shall ask,” &c. The natives retired a little to another position, and they all levelled their muskets again, and urged one another to shoot, and ultimately withdrew. Once again was he saved as a bird from the snare of the fowler. *God a helper in time of trouble*:—Gerhardt was exiled from Brandenburg by the Grand Elector in 1659. The said Grand Elector wished to “tune his pulpits.” Gerhardt refused to preach save what he found in God's Word. Notice to quit was thereupon promptly served upon the intrepid preacher; he tramped forth a homeless exile, accompanied by his wife and children. Wife and weans at night, wearied and weeping, sought refuge in a wayside inn; Gerhardt, unable to comfort them, went out into a wood to pray. As he prayed, the text, “Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass,” recurred to his mind, and comforted him so amazingly that he paced to and fro under the forest trees, and began composing a hymn, Englishised by John Wesley, beginning with the verse—

“Give to the winds thy fears.

Hope and be undismayed:

God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears;

God shall lift up thy head.”

Returning to the inn, he cheered his wife with the text and the hymn, and

they went to bed rejoicing in the confident hope that God would take care of them. They had hardly retired before a thunderous knocking at the door aroused them all. It was a mounted messenger from Duke Christian Meresberg, offering him "Church, people, home, and livelihood." So, adds the Chronicle, the Lord took care of His servant. (*W. T. Stead.*) **The Lifter up of my head.**—*Revival*.—This verse is the triumphal shout of David when under peculiarly trying circumstances. Happy is the man who makes God's ordered and sure covenant all his salvation and all his desire. Three things in the passage. I. FAVOUR. For Jehovah to become our "shield." If your religion is not opposed, it is not worth your having. Real godliness, real Christianity, cannot exist without being opposed. Sin is always opposed to grace. We are opposed on our journey heavenwards by ourselves. The Father shields us with His fixed decrees. The Son shields us with His imputed righteousness. The Holy Ghost shields us by His operations in the soul. II. OUR ORTHODOXY. "Thou, O Lord, art my glory." Theology may be brought into a very narrow compass; here it is in two words, "my glory." Every doctrine, every privilege, and every practice must glorify Him. The words "my glory" contain the idea of fixedness, in opposition to fickleness. III. THE REVIVAL. "The lifter up of my head." In times of experimental depression. From nature's ruin and degradation. This work is carried on by the Comforter's ministration. (*Joseph Irons.*)

Ver. 4. I cried unto the Lord with my voice.—*Turning to God in prayer*.—I. THE PSALMIST'S EXULTATION. "But Thou, O Lord." The second part of the Psalm shows how David's sense of the Divine presence and protection impelled him to rejoice, as if he were delivered from trial, although not yet actually set free. No sooner does he complain to God than he begins to experience consolation, for never does any one flee to the Saviour for refuge in vain. But to particularise: what kind of help does the Psalmist receive when he seeks Divine aid? He fled from Absalom defenceless, and God, like a shield, completely protects him: he was in disgrace, God becomes his glory; prostrate, and God lifts up his head. In a word, Jehovah supplements every deficiency. This is ever true. Dost thou desire wisdom? He will be thy wisdom. Glory? He will be thy glory. Riches? He will be thy wealth. Yea, He Himself will be *all* that thou cravest. The sweet sense of Divine compassion cannot be repressed, but will find vent in confession. Thus God is glorified, and the consciousness of His favour is increased by the very act of acknowledgment. II. METHOD OF GAINING DELIVERANCE. The Psalmist therefore unfolds the method which he had adopted—turning to God in prayer—"I cried unto the Lord with my voice." For let no man think that God bestows His grace on those who do not seek it, or opens the heavenly door to those who do not knock, still less to those who despise and refuse His proffered mercy. In this way He disciplines our faith, although He never grants the least favour because there is anything meritorious in our prayers. III. THE DIVINE RESPONSE. "And He heard me"—from the heavenly sanctuary, and also from the earthly tabernacle then radiant with the Divine presence. This is added so that all may know that God answers supplications, in harmony with His will, as quickly as we offer them, and thus causes success in prayer to stir us up to renewed petitions. The answer which was vouchsafed to David—God replying by deeds rather than by words—is specified at the end of the next verse, "the Lord sustained me." What he had stated before in several words, "Thou art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of my head," he afterwards expresses in a single phrase, "the Lord sustained me," thereby indicating his sense of Divine protection in the very midst of persecution. (*Robert Rollocks.*) *Prayer answered*.—John Rutledge, of Buffalo, a godly sailor, was used very much in winning his swearing, licentious fellows for the Saviour. They had left Buffalo when the lake was still dangerous with floating ice, and they had accomplished three-quarters of their way, when one morning, to the great alarm of crew and skipper, they saw the ice closing upon them. There was just a narrow passage straight ahead, and it was fast closing. If the ice close it will crush the ship to pieces like a tinder-box, and they will all be lost. The men's faces grew white, for the wind ceased and the calm came, as if to let the ice nip them and grip them to destruction. John Rutledge asked the skipper's leave to go down to his cabin and pray. The captain was a godless man, but eternity was nigh, and he believed in John Rutledge. He had sailed with John for many a voyage; and the Christian had commended Christ by his life. Happy soul when the man that works by you,—when your



comrades, at any rate, acknowledge your fidelity to Jesus. They may not like you, but yet they believe in you up to the hilt; and they trust in you even when they profess to despise you. John Rutledge got the skipper's leave to go down to the cabin and pray. As he was there on his knees a few of the men gathered with him, and amongst them the captain. Rutledge prayed that God would guide the vessel, that God would steer the craft, that God would deliver them. The men heard, and listened attentively. As they returned to deck, the man at the wheel greeted them with, "There is hope.—The wind is nor-nor-east." The wind began to "sough" and sigh and fill the sails, and the ice began to part; and the men said to the captain, "Shall we spread more canvas?" "No," he replied, "not a stitch. Somebody else is guiding this ship. Let her alone." A happy life is that when difficulties come, when rebellions arise, when doubts all drop upon deck, for the man to be able to say, "Let her drive; there is Someone else controlling and guiding."

Ver. 5. **I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.—***God's protection of the helpless:*—The reason why we sleep in peace and rise up in safety is, "the Lord sustained me." This is one of those truths, long familiar and unrealised, which later on in our spiritual life may become to us fresh discoveries. Underneath the beating of every heart, and underneath the whole order of human things, and underneath the world and all worlds, there is for ever a present active sustaining power from one generation to another, and that power is the power of God. The same truth is equally true if stated more widely. Whether we take as our measure the short time of the earth turning on itself, or the longer time of the earth travelling round; whether we speak of the day or of the sum of all the year, with its multitude of thoughts, its complexity of circumstances, its frequent risks and incessant occurrence of events;—still there is always abiding over us the same Divine protection, never tired, never slackening. Some people are so situated in life that they have but very little pressure and very few cares. All along the path of life seems smooth to them. That is but a tame life, and unless we have the nerve to make ourselves useful in some way, time so passed is a yoke which soon sits uneasy on the shoulder. Days wasted are a bad investment of life, and a dark account to be laying up. But the many are blessed with the pressure of responsibilities, and obliged to take up the happy burden of usefulness. All Christian burden-bearers have laid them down to sleep, and risen again feeling that a benefit has been conferred on them, a sustaining hand has been bearing them up, and their good God has been giving to the human trial the promise He speaks of, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The Hebrew word translated "sustained" means to place the open hand under a thing to support it. The Sept. renders by a word meaning "to take hold of one another by the hand, the weaker being so supported." How does the kindness of God support the weakness of all Christians? He tells His own secret in Col. i. It is done by His Christ and our Christ. There He says how He has qualified us to partake of the portion of the saints in light; how He has rescued us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is in Him, He says, we have redemption through His blood, even the remission of sins. Let us count up, discover, and consider these many mercies until our heart warms into some honourable and loving recognition of this care, which is never tired of us and never leaves us. We may feel confident from the past that God will take care of us in the future. (*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*) *Sleeping and waking:*—One of the mysteries of life of which men hardly think at all is the mystery of sleep. "Death's twin sister," it has been called. Into its secrets the cleverest man cannot pierce, though all men share its blessings. See the tired man worn out after a heavy day's work, or burdened with care. He flings himself on his bed, his day's work or his day's trouble, his foremost, ever-present thought. Kind sleep touches his eyes. His fatigue is forgotten, his cares are gone. What thought strikes us most forcibly as we look on the picture of the sleeper? Surely the thought of helplessness. The strongest man asleep cannot defend himself or help himself. And yet the millions of mankind daily lie down to sleep, and daily rise again, safely and in peace. Why? We know why, though we so often carelessly forget it. Because God is with us always, never leaving us for an instant to ourselves; about our path and about our bed; the Almighty Father, with more than a mother's love and tenderness. Ought we not to have, at least, David's faith? I say "at least" because we know so much more of God's truth than he did, have so much more

light upon our path than he had. We know our weakness and helplessness, but we know our Helper. If we will only love and serve God in Christ, and consecrate our lives to Him, we are safe. (*Samuel Jascoe.*) *A trustful sleeper*:—Luther noticed one evening a bird quietly settling down for the darkness of the night, and he exclaimed, "That little fellow preaches faith to us all! He takes hold of his twig, tucks his head under his wing, and goes to sleep, leaving God to think for him."

*Preserved amidst the dangers of the night*:—In Mongolia we had one rather serious adventure. The south edge of the plain is famed for storms, and the night we camped there, just after dark, began one of the fiercest thunderstorms I can remember having seen. The wind roared, the rain dashed, the tent quivered; the thunder rattled with a metallic ring, like shafts of iron dashing against each other, as it darted along a sheet-iron sky; the water rose in the tent till part of our bed was afloat. It was hardly possible to hear each other speak; but amid and above all the din of the tempest rose one sound not to be mistaken, the roar of rushing water. There was a river to right of us, but the sound came more from the left. Venturing out, I found there was a great swift-flowing river on both sides of us; that we could not move from the little piece of elevated land plain on which we had our tent; and that a few inches more water, or an obstacle getting into the path of the upper river, would send the full force of the current down on our tents. Flocks, herds, men are said to be swept away now and again in Mongolia, and for an hour our case seemed doubtful; but about 11 p.m. the storm ceased and the danger was over, and, though we had hardly anything left, we went to sleep, thanking God for His preserving mercy. (*James Gilmour.*) *And rose up again*.—*Christian uprising*:—The whole world is full of Divine tokens. Everything should put us in mind, more or less directly, of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The sun rising in the east is nature's token, to remind us of Christmas Day; and here in the text we find a no less clear token of the mysteries of Easter, our Lord dying and rising again. It is not anything new to have such a verse applied to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. The old fathers and bishops so explained it from the very beginning of the Church. We do well to connect this mystery with our own lying down and rising up as often as night and morning return. Sleep is an image of death. To a Christian it is an image of the death of Christ. Our daily lying down and rising up is given us for a sacramental sign and pledge of Christ's death and resurrection, and of our own. Our falling asleep is a mystery, a thing which takes place we know not how, a thing out of our power, as much so as death itself. What becomes of us during our sleep? That longer sleep which we call death may come on us we know not how, and leave our bodies without power or thought for awhile, our souls in the meantime departing we know not where, and employed we know not how. There is a still higher and more awful depth of mystery in the Psalmist's words, spoken as they are in His person, who is both God and man. It is as if we heard Christ Himself, risen from the tomb, and saying, "I laid Me down and slept, and rose up again, for the Lord sustained Me." The Lord, the most high and glorious God-head, still in our Saviour's Person, inseparably joined to His human soul and body, even while the one was in the grave and the other in Paradise, or elsewhere in the regions of the dead,—He still continued the same Christ, very God and very man, and by virtue of that Eternal Spirit He raised Himself from the dead when His time was come. Notice what gracious help is afforded to those who are willing so to lift up their hearts, by Christ's making so common a matter as our daily sleep and awakening a token and sign of this most awful mystery. Christ, even now abiding in His people, makes them already in this world partakers of a heavenly and Divine life. He sustains them, sleeping and waking, in life and in death, in their beds and in their graves; for in both conditions they are alike members of Him. But all this depends upon our keeping our baptismal vows. One or two rules of recovery and perseverance—1. Since it is Christ only who sustains us, when in our lying down, or sleeping, or rising up, how dare any of us lie down or rise up without solemnly committing himself to Christ on his knees in devout prayer? Private devotion must be one great help towards saving and recovering the heavenly life which our Lord offers to sustain in us. 2. The Holy Communion of the Body and the Blood. This is the sacrament of perseverance and growth in grace, as baptism is of repentance and regeneration. The heavenly life which Christ has begun in us can be sustained in no other way besides that which He has appointed. Prayer, then, and Holy Communion, are necessary to all. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the*

*Times.*") I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me.—*Faith stronger than fear*:—It is said that the Romans were accustomed only to inquire where the enemies were, and not after their numbers. Faith revived and invigorated by prayer and fixed on God alone is a stranger to fear in the worst of times. (*Bp. Horne.*)

Ver. 7. **Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone.**—*The secret of David's confidence*:—This shows that David's expectation of victory was not in himself, in his personal prowess as a warrior, but in the faithfulness of the Lord his God. Hence his impassioned cry, "Arise, O Lord! save me, O my God!" It is true that David marshalled his forces as a skilful and experienced general should, and as carefully as if everything in the battle to ensue was to be accomplished by the sword alone;—and yet he still looked to God alone for success. And to inspire himself with confidence that God would give success, he refers to the victories He had given him in times past, saying, "Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." This imagery of breaking the cheek bone and teeth of enemies is likening them to wild beasts whose great power is in their jaws and teeth, so that when their jaws and teeth are broken their power to injure is gone. The imagery, then, indicates that the Lord had always destroyed the power of David's enemies to injure him. And as the Lord had subdued his enemies before him hitherto, David could not but believe that He would subdue them still. This, his belief, was not in vain, as the speedy winding up of Absalom's rebellion showed; for Absalom's forces, though outnumbering his father's probably more than ten to one, were utterly routed and dispersed, and himself slain, in the first and only battle fought. The battle was the Lord's, the victory His, and to Him David ascribes it. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

Ver. 8. **Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.**—*Thanksgiving after peace*:—I. THE MEANING OF THIS SENTIMENT. The words carry a general confession of the influence of Divine Providence upon every event, and in particular with respect to salvation, or deliverance from impending danger. The words imply three things. 1. All confidence in man stands opposed to the sentiment. It is not opposed to the use of means, but to an excessive reliance on second causes of any kind. Success in any attempt is to be ultimately attributed to God. 2. The Psalmist had in view the omnipotence of Providence. God has not only the direction and government of means and second causes, but is Himself superior to all means. Salvation signifies a great and distinguished deliverance. 3. The sentiment has respect to the mercy and goodness of God, or His readiness to hear the cry of the oppressed and send deliverance to His people. Power and wisdom alone give an imperfect display of the Divine character. II. DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN DEALING WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. In conclusion, some practical improvement of the subject. 1. It is our duty to give praise to God for the present happy and promising state of public affairs. 2. We should testify our gratitude to God by living in His fear, and by a conversation such as becometh the gospel. 3. And by usefulness in our several stations. Let us guard against using our liberty as a cloak for licentiousness, and thus poisoning the blessing after we have attained it. (*T. Witherspoon, D.D.*) *God the Author of salvation*:—This will be seen if we consider—I. THE WORK OF THE FATHER IN DEVISING IT. 1. Adam fell by his own sin, and so involved all posterity. 2. Thus all needed salvation; and 3. God's free grace devised it. II. THE INCARNATION AND ATONEMENT OF CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, WHICH EXECUTED IT. III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST IN APPLYING IT. For of ourselves we cannot repent and believe. And yet unless we do we are lost. It is the Holy Spirit that brings us into a state of grace. (*T. Myers, A.M.*) **Thy blessing is upon Thy people.**—*Blessings*:—At the Mint a piece of gold is put under the stamp, and in the twinkling of an eye the machine descends and the gold becomes a sovereign. So when we see that God is our Father, and that He in Christ died for us, then in a moment, like the stamp on the gold, we receive the witness of the Holy Spirit. The gold bears the stamp of the King; but our hearts the image and blessing of God. 1. WHAT IS A BLESSING? Not merely when we have what we wish, but far more when we do not wish what we have not. II. THE GREATEST BLESSING IS TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE LORD FOR OUR FATHER. III. IT IS A GREAT BLESSING WHEN WE CAN LIVE TEMPERATELY. What a curse is drunkenness. IV. IS NOT THE BIBLE A BLESSING? An infidel said one day,



"There is only one thing that troubles me : I am afraid the Bible is true." But what a blessing that it is so. When Sir Walter Scott lay dying he requested a friend to help him into his library, so that he could look out from the window on the river Tweed. Then he asked for something to be read to him. His friend said, "What book shall I select?" Sir Walter replied, "Can you ask? There is but one—the Bible." Is this book a blessing to you? V. THE LORD GIVES HIS PEOPLE THE BLESSING OF BEING ABLE TO TRUST HIM. In the darkness of night you may strike a match and try to light the candle, but you must first take off the extinguisher. And so you cannot feel happy while you keep on the extinguisher of doubt over your heart. How blessed it is to trust in God. VI. WHAT A BLESSING TO KNOW THAT JESUS DIED FOR US. (*William Birch.*) *God's blessing, and the way to gain it:—*I. WHAT IS GOD'S BLESSING? Given an occasion upon which we are called upon to write on paper our idea of the Divine blessing: hand me the papers and I will examine them: shall I find in a thousand instances upwards of nine hundred that will run after this fashion?—God's blessing is sunshine, music, prosperity, deliverance from all affliction, distress, fear; God's blessing is on the house where there is no vacant chair, upon the fold where there is no dead lamb, upon the estate where there is no covered grave. So your papers would read, and so would they be wrong. God's blessing may be upon a man without any sense of external sunshine. The clouds do not alter the month. There may be dark clouds upon a June noonday, but it is still June, the sun is still warm, summer is still on the eve of coming upon us, with all its countless flowers and all its ineffable music. God's blessing does not mean exemption from pain; nor does God's discipline mean mere penalty. God's blessing is not a sleeping draught but an inspiration. If you are asleep when you ought to be awake do not say, This is the blessing of God. God's blessing, I repeat, is not an opiate; it is an inspiration, an excitement, a voice in the soul that says, Onward! II. HOW ARE WE TO KNOW THAT THE BLESSING IS ON US? Easily; there need be no difficulty about that. When you feel that you must do more work, God's blessing is upon you. Be sure of that confidence. When you want to be idle, God has withdrawn from you because you have withdrawn from Him. When are we to know that God's blessing is upon us? I will tell you: when you feel that you must help other people more liberally than you have ever done; not when you tie your purse-strings, but when you open them is God's blessing on you. You have done nothing yet; I have done nothing yet. It is the crime of the Church that it has played with its responsibilities. We are always compounding with God, we are always filing our bill in the chancery-court of heaven, and asking God to accept a penny in the pound. Do not close your eyes under such circumstances and say, This is the comfort of grace. When you feel that you must go four-and-twenty hours in the day in doing good, God's blessing is upon you. Of course, nature will say, Lie down, poor child, and rest awhile, because time spent in sleep is time spent in true labour; thou shalt in sleep recover thine energy, and do tenfold more because of a good night's rest. But when the first thought is work, and the middle thought is work, and the last thought is work, then say, Thy blessing is upon Thy people; this is no longer an inspiration but a fact accomplished. III. WE CANNOT ARRANGE FOR THE DIVINE BLESSING. Do not accept the sophism that the Divine blessing can be used as an element in speculation or investment. The Divine blessing comes as the wheat comes: it comes after ripping up the earth, sowing it, preparing it, and after a long process, it may be, of waiting; so it comes not by itself but as the final mark in a series, as the blessing upon a process. When the golden wheat swings in the autumnal wind and throws back the autumnal sunlight, all the seasons of the year seem to culminate in that one motion. Winter is there, because winter gave the earth its hospitality of sleep; spring is there, and summer is there, and autumn is there: in that golden wheat the four seasons of the year hold harmonious festival. Some have not begun yet to do anything. When the lists are made out our names will not be upon them. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The blessing of God:—*I. GOD'S SPECIAL RELATION IN THE WORLD. "Thy people." The king of a nation and the father of a family hold peculiar relations. II. FROM GOD'S SPECIAL RELATION SPRING SPECIAL BENEFITS. "Thy blessing." The ruler of a people, from his position and power, holds in his hands benefits which are for his nation alone. A loving father has a peculiar regard for the welfare of his own family. Israel enjoyed benefits that were not extended to other nations. III. THE BENEFITS SPRINGING FROM THE SPECIAL RELATION MUST BE SOUGHT BY PRAYER. Spiritual blessings are obtained only by prayer. The Apostles had a definite

promise given to them of the Holy Ghost, yet they were commanded to pray for His descent (Acts i. 4-14). So in the individual life (Luke xi. 13). (*William Harris.*) *The best inheritance*:—This was the confidence and comfort of the Psalmist when deprived of earthly friends and earthly comforts. The more we know of the power of sin, the more we shall prize the sovereignty of God. I. THE NATURE OF THIS BLESSING WHICH IS UPON THE PEOPLE OF GOD. All the blessedness they have is by Christ Jesus the Lord; and to understand the blessing we must look to the Lord Jesus Christ. As there was a fourfold curse pronounced upon the serpent, you will find the very reverse relative to the Lord Jesus Christ and His people. 1. The serpent was to “go upon his belly.” While the enemy is condemned in all that he does, the Lord Jesus Christ is justified in all that He does. The Lord Jesus felt that all He thought, and all He did, and all He said was right. He felt that He had no sin of His own. He enjoys the consciousness that all He has done and does is right, and we in Him get rid of all our sins, guilt, and fears, and rest not in a consciousness of our fleshly, personal, legal right, but in a consciousness of the righteousness of Christ, the efficacy of His great salvation, the eternity of His glory. Draw a line of distinction between a moral reality and a spiritual reality. Moral reality is good, and a good principle to act upon among men; but if I go to eternal things I must go beyond this—I must come to the reality of atoning blood, I must come to the reality of saving grace. 2. The enemy was “to eat dust.” This is to be understood figuratively. As for the enemy, and all that are with him, their attainments shall be all perishable—shall be but dust. Was the Lord Jesus to feed upon perishable things? No. His meat, His attainments are imperishable, His honours incorruptible, His glories inimitable, His grandeur indescribable. While He lived in this world He lived upon immortal things. He is with us in these infinite provisions, in opposition to that destitution, that famine, that state of misery which we deserve. The “blessing” overcomes a great curse. While dust shall be the serpent’s meat, our bread shall be royal dainties. 3. The serpent was to be cast out. There was to be enmity between him and the woman, and between his seed and her seed. They should come together, and one or the other must prevail. “The prince of this world is cast out.” 4. The serpent’s head should be bruised. Here is the confusion, the defeat, of all his plans. But can confusion ever reach the infinite mind of Jehovah-Jesus? II. THE PROGRESSION OF THIS BLESSING. It has been progressive from age to age; and nothing has met with so much opposition. Look at some typical circumstances and watch the progression. Cases of Joseph, David, Mordecai, the Redeemer Himself. See the progress in two individual cases, that of Jeremiah and that of Paul. There is this difference between providence and grace. Grace is progressive, but providence is retrogressive. The fruit we had last year is gone, but the grace we had when the world was created we have now. None of it passes away. III. THE CONTINUATION OF THE BLESSING. This originates chiefly in the manner of it. There is no way in which anything contrary to it can enter into the vitals of this blessing, or into the union which the people have with Christ, to affect that union. If you look behind them there is mercy behind them from everlasting. If you look at what is before them, it is eternal life, eternal salvation, eternal glory. So that from the very manner of this blessing no curse can come in. (*James Wells.*) *The people of God*:—I. THE PEOPLE. The children of Israel were, in a national sense, the people of God. But were they so individually? It is not the name of Christian that can stamp us the people of God. It is in a personal, and not merely in a national or ecclesiastical sense, that God’s people are an elect people. II. THIS PEOPLE ARE A PURCHASED PEOPLE. What shall be the price paid down for that spiritual people, the Church of the first-born? We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the blood of Christ. III. THE PEOPLE ARE A VOLUNTARY PEOPLE. They do not follow God reluctantly, as did the literal Israel. Every one can say with David, I have “chosen” the way of truth. IV. A HOLY PEOPLE (Deut. xiv. 2). The sanctity of Israel was only external and relative; only a type of the purity of the invisible Church. The whole body of the people of whom we speak are holy in an internal and personal sense (John i. 13; 1 John iii. 24). V. A PEOPLE VALUED AND BELOVED. We value the objects of our choice because we have chosen them. God’s blessing is on the people themselves, and on their allotments, enjoyments, and even their afflictions, and their labours and connections. (*T. Kennion, M. A.*) *Trust in God’s over-rule*:—Dr. Stewart of Moulin said, “I remember an old pious very reclusive minister whom I used to meet once a year. He scarcely ever looked at a newspaper. When others were talking about the French

Revolution he showed no concern or curiosity about it. He said he knew from the Bible how it would all end, better than the most sagacious politician : that the Lord reigns ; that the earth shall be filled with His glory ; that the gospel should be preached to all nations ; that all subordinate events are working out these great ends. This was enough for him, and he gave himself no concern about the news or events of the day, only saying, "It will be well with the righteous."

#### PSALM IV.

**VERS. 1-8. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness.**—*A gentle remonstrance*.—This Psalm is mainly a gentle, earnest remonstrance with antagonists, seeking to win them to a better mind. The cry for an answer by deed is based on the name and on the past acts of God. The pronoun "my" is best attached to "righteousness," as the consideration that God is righteous is less relevant than that He is the source of the Psalmist's righteousness. Since He is so, He may be expected to vindicate it by answering prayer with deliverance. He who feels that all good in himself comes from God may be quite sure that, sooner or later, and by some means or other, God will witness to His own work. The strophe division keeps together the prayer and the beginning of the remonstrance to opponents, and does so in order to emphasise the eloquent, sharp juxtaposition of God and the "sons of men." Ver. 6 may be the continuance of the address to the enemies, carrying on the exhortation to trust. Vers. 7 and 8 are separated from ver. 6 by their purely personal reference. The Psalmist returns to the tone of his prayer in ver. 1 ; only, that petition has given place, as it should do, to possession and confident thankfulness. The Psalmist here touches the bottom, the foundation fact on which every life that is not vanity must be based, and which verifies itself in every life that is so based. The glad heart possessing Jehovah can lay itself down and sleep, though foes stand round. The last words of the Psalm flow restfully like a lullaby. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The great trials of life*.—I. PRAYING. 1. A recognition of God's righteousness. He might have thought upon God now as the "author" of his righteousness, and felt that all that was righteous in his own heart and life came from God ; or as the vindicator of his righteousness who alone was able to defend his righteous cause ; or as the administrator of righteousness, conducting His government upon righteous principles and bringing even upon him only the sufferings he justly deserved. There is something deep in the soul of man which leads him to appeal to the righteous God when he feels himself to be the victim of fraud or violence. Even Christ Himself did so. 2. A remembrance of God's goodness. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." The reference is to some deliverance which he had experienced. He remembered, perhaps, the goodness of God to him when, in the field guarding his father's flocks, he was delivered out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear ; or His goodness to him in delivering him from the giant of Philistia. The memory of God's past mercies to him gave courage to his heart and an argument in his prayer now. Because God has helped us we expect Him to help us again, and thus we plead. Not so with man. The more our fellow-being has helped us the less reason we have to expect His aid. Man's capacity for help is limited. The capability of God is unbounded. 3. An invocation of God's favour. "... Have mercy upon me and hear my prayer." Mercy is what we want. Mercy to forgive, to renovate, to strengthen the soul, to labour and to wait. II. REBUKING. David having addressed the righteous God in prayer, hurls his rebuke at his enemies. His rebuke is marked—1. By boldness. "... O ye sons of men"—ye great men of the land—"... O how long will ye turn my glory into shame, how long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing?" In this appeal the speaker's sense of honour, justice, truth seems to have run into a passion that fired and flooded his whole being. 2. By alarm. "... Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto Him," which means, "Know this, the Lord will take care of me whom He has elected King to serve Himself, and He will hear when I call upon Him." Your opposition is futile. Beware, you are rebelling not merely against me, but against Omnipotence itself. It is a terrible thing to oppress or injure God's elected ones. 3. By authority. "... Stand in awe, and sin not, commune with your own heart on



your bed, and be still. Selah.”—Mind this. This command includes three things. (1) Cease from your rage. Let your insurrectionary passion be hushed. The soul under wrong passions is like a rudderless bark driven by the tempest; shipwreck is all but inevitable. (2) Retire to thoughtfulness. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” It is in man’s own soul that God meets with him, and communes with him as He did of old before the mercy-seat. (3) Practise religion. “. . . Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.” What is righteous sacrifice? The consecration of our energies, our self, our all, to the service of justice, truth, and God. “. . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart Thou wilt not despise.”

III. TEACHING. “There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.” 1. The universal craving of humanity. “. . . There are many that say unto us,” &c. Men are everywhere craving for happiness. From shops and sanctuaries, from the peasant’s cot and the prince’s castle, from the bush of savages and the bench of senators, from all lands and lips the cry is heard, “Who will show us any good?” We are children walking in the dark, who will show us the way; we are dying with thirst, who will moisten our fevered lips; we are starving with hunger, who will give us any bread? Man, the world over, feels that he has not what he wants. 2. The only satisfaction of humanity. What is it? Fame, wealth, sensual pleasure, superstitious observances? No, these have been tried a thousand times, and failed. Here it is: “Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance,” which means the conscious presence and favour of God. IV. EXULTING. “. . . Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.” Some render this from the time in which their corn and wine increased, supposing David to refer to the hour when abundant supplies began to come into him, an exile at Mahanaim (2 Sam. xvi. 1, xvii. 28). This may be the correct version. The language in either version expresses the feelings of a soul happy in God. 1. God made him inwardly happy, even in his poverty. He had lost for a time his palace and his kingdom, and was dependent upon the supplies of friends. Yet he was happy, and who made him happy? “. . . Thou hast put gladness in my heart.” God alone can make us happy anywhere and anywhen. “. . . Although the fig tree shall not blossom,” &c. (Hab. iii. 17). What does Paul say? “. . . I glory in tribulation.” Martyrs have sung in dungeons, and triumphed in flames. 2. God made him consciously secure. His enemies counted their millions. His death they desired. Yet what does he say?—“. . . I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep.” God was his refuge and strength, &c. “. . . If God be for us, who can be against us?” Learn from this poem where happiness alone can be found. It is in God. An ancient Italian author, in one of his romantic legends, tells us of a tree, many branched, and covered apparently with delectable bunches of fruit; but whose shook that tree in order to possess the fruit, found, too late, that not fruit, but stones of crushing weight came down upon his head. An emblem this of the tree of unholy pleasure. It is many-branched, it is attractive in aspect, its boughs bend with rich clusters of what seems to be delicious fruit, the millions of the world gather round it, and, with eager hands, shake it in order if possible to taste the luscious fruit. But what is the result of their efforts? Stones come tumbling down that paralyse the soul. “What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed; for the end of those things is death.” (*Homilist.*)

*An appeal for mercy to the God of righteousness:—*I. THE PSALMIST’S APPEAL. This book is full of such appeals. It is remarkable that there has come down to us a book full of the most confidently, reverent, pleading utterances, addressed to the unseen and eternal God. There are not many petitions in this Psalm. “Hear me when I call”—only “hear me,” that is enough. Is there no heart to respond to us? Yes, He is hearing, that is enough. II. THE GROUNDS OF THE APPEAL. Two considerations on which the appeal is founded. 1. The character of God. Not simply “my righteous God,” but “God, the author of my righteousness, from Whom all that is true and right in me has come.” 2. And the goodness already experienced. “Thou hast enlarged me.” It was not untried mercy. No one looks to history for a message of despair—at any rate, no good man—for he always finds that the storm ends in calm, that the darkest hour precedes the dawn, that the struggles result in progress. Let us also appeal for mercy to the God of righteousness, and take the past as an argument. There has been care in the past; there has been goodness in the past: Gethsemane is in the past; Calvary is in the past. Plead the past. (*James Owen.*) Thou hast enlarged me.—*Prayer and answer to*

*prayer*.—I. DAVID'S PRAYER FOR MERCY DESIRED. 1. The title which David here puts upon God. "God of my righteousness." That is, the God who makes me to be righteous: the Author of it. Better here, the God that shows me to be righteous, that maintains my righteous cause. Look at this—(1) Directly in itself. God does own the righteousness of those who are His servants. This is grounded on His nature. His affection and His relation carries Him to it likewise. He is my God, and therefore the God of my righteousness. There is also His covenant and interest. In two ways God owns our righteousness. In clearing it and in avenging it. (2) Reflexively, as coming from David; who, having righteousness and equity on his side, does now with a great deal of boldness and confidence take himself to God for redress. Whence we see what is to be practised by every one else. 2. The request itself. "Hear me when I call" has respect to David's complaint in case of injury. "Hear my prayer," that is, grant me that particular request which I desire of Thee. See his desire of being heard in his performance, "when I call." Attention must be given to the matter of prayer, that it be such as is according to God's will; the manner of prayer, that it be with zeal, fervency, and intention; the principle of prayer, that it be done in faith. There should also be the ordering of ourselves in other things suitable hereunto, as their hearing of God Himself. Hearing of others in their necessities: abstaining from all kinds of sin whatsoever. 3. The terms whereupon he deals with Him. On account of mercy, grace, and favour. We must have recourse to His mercy, and urge upon Him this consideration above all others. Let us make much of this attribute of mercy, and improve it to our own comfort and advantage. II. DAVID'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MERCY RECEIVED. God loves to manifest His power in deliverance. He brings into distress, and so from thence takes occasion to enlarge. There is a double enlargement, one of state and condition; the other of heart and affection. There is a double enlargement of spirit, the one is in order to duty, the other in order to comfort. (*Thomas Horton, D.D.*) *Spiritual enlargement*.—This enlargement is the great thing to be desired and sought after in all our histories. Sin dwarfs us—it lowers us alike in the scale of creation and in the scope of our immortal being. So possible is it for all true spiritual life to be crushed, all inward growth and spiritual development to be repressed, by worldliness of heart and aim. The contrast therefore is a study; enlargement of estate, or enlargement of soul. "Thou hast enlarged me." Here is a beautiful consciousness. I. THE CAUSE REVEALED. "When I was in distress." Distress had driven me to Him Who revealed me to myself. He diminished my estate and my health; but He enlarged me. II. THE QUESTION SUGGESTED. Why? Because I am a man capable of enlargement. You cannot enlarge the merely finite like this. Every spiritual advance is only a step upward and onward in the immortal ascent, every enlargement is only a prophecy of yet wider range. Not one word can be said too much of the majesty of the soul. Standing on the verge of eternity after long years of life, the soul is yet young, and feels the immortal pulses. It is just beginning to know. Unless we grow in grace we may question if we are Christians at all, for life means growth, and the knowledge of God is the infinite study of eternity. III. THE INFLUENCE CREATED. An enlarged man has a glorious might of personal influence; such a man elevates social intercourse as he moves among his fellows, and treats their interests in the light of their larger being. The enlarged man seeks to have part in the kingdom which brings life and peace to all his brethren in Christ. IV. THE EXPECTATION ENJOINED. For what is all this enlargement given? Surely the Divine ministries have a worthy end and aim, or else we have a mystery in man which we have in no other sphere of use or adaptation. The soul implies Divine training and immortal rest. Heaven is the corollary of soul life. Faint not under the good hand of God, for He will exalt you in good time. The enlarged life will have a sphere, where it can enjoy and serve God, for ever and for evermore. Thus, too, may we bear distress aright. (*W. M. Statham.*) *Enlargement in distress*.—This Psalm and the previous one are Psalms of distress, utterances of a soul that is crying to God out of the depths; yet, none the less, they are songs of faith, hope, rest in God. In the text we see that gladness comes out of the sorrow, and light shines out of the darkness. I. THROUGH DISTRESS THERE COMES AN ENLARGEMENT OF PERSONAL CHARACTER. 1. Suffering strengthens character; brings to light the hidden qualities of a man, and teaches him courage, endurance, and self-reliance. I have read of a great botanist who was exiled from his native land, and had obtained employment as an under-gardener in a noblemen's service, that while in this situation his master received the present of a valuable plant, the nature and habits of which were quite

unknown to him. It was given to the care of the head-gardener, and he, supposing it to be of tropical growth, put it into a hothouse, and treated it like other hothouse plants. Under this treatment the plant began to wither and die. One day the under-gardener asked permission to examine it, and as soon as he had done so he said, "This is an Arctic plant, and you are killing it with this hothouse treatment." So he took it out to the open air, and heaped ice round it, to the great astonishment of the head-gardener. The result justified his wisdom; for the plant was soon perfectly healthy and strong. This story is a parable of human character. It is ease, not difficulty, that is dangerous. Put a man under hothouse treatment, surround him with luxury, hedge him in from opposition; and you take the surest means of sapping him of life and power. Teach him to suffer; and you teach him to be strong. 2. But in a large character, sympathy must be present as well as strength. Without sympathy no character can possess that breadth which is so essential to its perfecting; and there is no such teacher of sympathy as suffering. II. THINK OF THE LARGER AND Surer PLACE WHICH SUFFERING GIVES US IN THE WORLD OF MEN. There is something in the experience of suffering which enhances a man's social influence. In every walk of life the men of sorrows are the men of power. We may not be able fully to explain why this is so; but we know quite well that the very fact of suffering gives a man a claim upon us, and a hold over us, which nothing else can give. "Under our present conditions," says one, "there is something in the very expansiveness of joy which dissociates, while sorrow seems to weld us together, like hammer-strokes on steel." Do we not find that the influence which Jesus exerts is an emanation from His Cross? He was made "perfect through sufferings"—not perfect in His own nature, for that was perfect already, but perfect in His power to touch and save and bless; and so His dominion was enlarged through His distress. III. No doubt David was thinking most of all of a religious enlargement—AN ENLARGEMENT OF HIS HEART TOWARDS GOD, AND AN ENLARGEMENT OF GOD'S MERCY TOWARDS HIM. 1. Men are enlarged through their distress. Their horizon grows wider and deeper. The sunlight fades, the night falls; but in the darkness a greater and more glorious world appears; for the stars shine out from the immeasurable depths—those "street lamps of the City of God." 2. Our enlargement in distress does not lie only in our new thoughts about God, but in God's new mercies towards us. The Lord has special mercies for His children in distress, as a mother has kisses and fond soothing words for her little child who has hurt himself by a fall. Did you ever consider this, that there are stores of blessing held in reserve within the eternal treasures, the fulness of which you can only know in the day of trial? 3. In one of two ways distress works—it makes a man either better or worse. We have seen it making people narrower and more selfish and more sullen. We have also seen it making them broader and more sympathetic, more considerate and more gracious. All depends upon their way of meeting it. Meet it in the Psalmist's faith, hope, and patience. (*J. C. Lambert, B.D.*)

Ver. 3. Him that is godly.—*The godly man*:—"The godly." They are evidently a distinguished, a peculiar people. They have undergone a process of change. There may be a very exalted scale of morals observed by men, but still it amounts not to the scriptural idea of godliness, for all that comes within the range of moral observance may be entirely without reference to God. Godliness is a state of mind and heart which is derived from a source higher than man. I. THE SOURCE OF GODLINESS. It must be God Himself; Almighty power, acting out the dictates of Almighty grace and love, can alone bring a sinner, from his state of abject degradation, near to God, and pour into his nature the renovating spirit that shall bring upon him the lineaments of that perfection in which he was at first created. If God "sets apart" or "chooses" a sinner, therefore, it is in order that there may be produced in him affinity to Christ, likeness to Christ—likeness to Christ in principle, in desire and intention, in motive, in affections, in actions. Incidental to this, and essential to it, is the conviction of sin which the Spirit of God creates in the heart. It includes also a closing with the terms of salvation, on the part of the sinner—the laying aside of sin in the act, though he cannot lay it aside, in his own will, in its inward power and principle—the laying aside of sin in the act, and looking for grace that shall subdue sin in its power. It includes also the acceptance of a free pardon of all past sin—an assurance of the imputation of all sin to the Saviour, in order to its expiation, and the impartation of the Saviour's righteousness to the sinner, in order to his justification. It includes that simple exercise of faith which is of God's bestowment. II. THE END PROPOSED. "The Lord hath set apart



him that is godly for Himself." He is brought into a state of sonship with God. He may not at first have, but he expects to have, the witnessing of the Spirit. God has created all things in the universe for His own glory. We may at first, while contemplating the great purposes of the gospel, imagine that God's primary end was to rescue the lost and to pardon the guilty. But by man's creation God glorified Himself, and by man's fall He acquired glory, inasmuch as in the recovery of man was brought into exercise that bright and blessed attribute of mercy which could not otherwise have been manifested. III. THE PRIVILEGES CONNECTED WITH A STATE OF GODLINESS. "The Lord will hear when I call unto Him." How full of privilege is this avowal and assurance! It implies that—1. The godly man has the privilege of access, when he will, to "the King of kings and Lord of lords." The presence-chamber is never closed. The believer has a kind of precedence of others into the presence of the Sovereign. 2. The godly man has a claim upon God; and this we would put in the strongest terms. At first he has no claims on God; but being conformed to the image of Christ, or even beginning to be conformed, he immediately has a claim on Him—a claim based on God's paternity. 3. To "hear" in Scripture language means to "answer." The Lord will hear on account of the agreement there is between the Spirit that animates the believing heart and his own mind and intention. Tell me what is in the wide world, for which men are bartering such blessed prospects for eternity, worth a moment's notice, when godliness, with all its happy privileges, is fully set before you at the foot of the Cross of the Redeemer! (*George Fisk, LL.D.*)

Ver. 4. *Stand in awe.*—*Awe of God*:—All sin is an offence against God, and nothing tends more powerfully to correct it than worthy thoughts of God, and of our relation to Him. They who have no habitual thought of God, who set Him not before them in their daily walk, find no principle and no power present with them to prevent the admission and indulgence of evil. If you would cease from sinning, stand in awe. Let there be a fear and dread upon your mind, arising from a sense of the power, and holiness, and justice, and presence of the Almighty. There is nothing which can enable us to stand firm and upright in the presence of evil, but a due sense of the presence of Almighty God, and of the relation which we bear to Him under the gospel covenant. If the awful feeling, the sense which is due from every rational creature to the Creator, were formed, and cherished, and carried into the scenes of daily life it would become a powerful preservative from sin. To impress our hearts deeply consideration should be had of those declarations of holy writ which assure us that the necessity of a pious awe is by no means done away under the covenant of loving-kindness and tender mercy. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *The duty of reverence*:—1. THE ADVANTAGES OF MAINTAINING SERIOUSNESS AND DEVOUTNESS OF MIND. The greatest of happiness consists in regulating, with propriety, the various offices of human life. Every department of life is beautiful in its season. There is a time to be cheerful, and a time to be serious: an hour for solitude, and an hour for society. A serious frame of mind is the guardian and the protector of religion, and it also associates with other virtues which belong to the Christian character. This serious frame of mind cherishes those higher virtues of the soul which are called "the armour of God." In the solemn silence of the mind are formed those great resolutions which decide the fate of men. This temper is no less favourable to the milder virtues of humanity. A serious mind is the companion of a feeling heart. II. THE SUITABLENESS OF THIS TEMPER OF MIND TO OUR PRESENT STATE. 1. It is suited to that dark and uncertain state of being in which we now live. Human life is not formed to answer those high expectations which, in the era of youth and imagination, we are apt to entertain. 2. The propriety of this temper will appear if we consider the scene that soon awaits us, and the awful change of being that we have to undergo. 3. This frame of mind is peculiarly proper for you now, as a preparation for holy communion. (*J. Logan, F.R.S.E.*) *Awe and trust*:—Words like awe, fear, trembling appear to be almost obsolete now. Our speech finds its emphasis in such words as happiness, joy, peace, comfort. The Psalmist throws us back to quite a different plane. This man had a vision of the great White Throne. He had been contemplating the terrors of the Lord. His levity is changed into trembling; his indifference is broken up in awe. Why is there so little awe in our religious lives to-day? Is it because we have lost the Face of God? We gather up all the gracious promises. We lift them out of their context. Promises gathered in their relationship to warnings will tend to our good. We see the same tendency in our choice of hymns. We do not like the hymns in which the

whirlwind sweeps and drives. We prefer the hymns that are just filled with honey. Many of us have lost the severities of the New Testament. It is because these terrors are left out in our religious conceptions, and in our preaching, that the frivolity of men is gratified and coddled by illegitimate sweetness. We must re-proclaim the elements of severity which minister to a bracing holiness. Men do not feel the power of the gospel when in Christ they discern nothing to fear. Thomas Boston said that the net of the gospel needed to be weighted with the leads of the terrors of the law, or it would lightly float on the surface and no fish be caught. We must steadily keep in view the sterner patches of the New Testament teaching. We must contemplate the whiteness of the Eternal, and stand in awe, "and put your trust in the Lord." How graciously the passage closes! The awe and the trembling converge in fruitful trust! The discovery of the holy Sovereignty, the discovery of personal defilement, the discovery of a Redeemer, are consummated in the discovery of rest. When I have found my "righteousness" my part is now to trust. The awe, the purity of the holy Sovereignty will become mine. Trust keeps open the line of communication between the soul and God. Along that line convoys of blessedness are brought into the heart; manifold gifts of grace for the weak and defenceless spirit. When I trust I keep open the "highway of the Lord," and along that road there come to me from the Eternal my bread, my water, my instructions, my powers of defence. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." I can "work out my own salvation with fear and trembling." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

*Reverence*.—The most prominent sin of this age is flippancy. Familiarity breeds contempt. In many instances knowledge only leads men to treat law as a light thing, and its operations with thoughtless neglect. How can this evil be overcome? The answer is not far to seek; it is by fostering in men the principle of awe that David here enjoins. I. WE SHOULD STAND IN AWE BEFORE NATURE. The stupendous magnificence and mysterious changefulness of nature appeal to even the most apathetic and thoughtless. No part of nature and of human life is free from the dominion of law. Everything has its own peculiar laws. II. WE SHOULD STAND IN AWE BEFORE CONSCIENCE. The knowledge of right and wrong is co-extensive with the existence of humanity. It is the essential basis of society, and of all mutual intercourse of men. Under the shadow of this great possession all men meet as brothers. We realise the influence of conscience first as our teacher. III. WE SHOULD STAND IN AWE BEFORE EXPERIENCE. Instinct is the stronger force in the animal life, and reason the stronger in human life. Experience is peculiarly the guide and teacher of humanity, and he who cannot profit by its teaching fails to progress as a man should. Experience is one long series of revelations to a man. No one can stand before the revelations of experience without feeling awed. If we reach a definite realisation of the magnificence of human life, the majesty of man, and the God-like powers, high purposes, and glorious destiny that, as Christ shows, are ours, we will be so filled with awe that sin will become an abhorrent thing to us. If we stand in awe we cannot sin. (*D. L. Francis, M.A.*)

*And sin not*.—*The nature and consequences of sin*.—In uttering the word "sin" how few are there amongst men, even though serious minded, who connect with it sentiments and feelings corresponding to its own true force and significance! Yet this is a word pregnant with all the terrible calamities which flesh is heir to. I. THE NATURE OF SIN. 1. Sin is a gathering evil. Its first indulgence ends not in itself, but the gratification strengthens the desire. The first act of sin will often make a second necessary, by placing us in situations which we had not contemplated. 2. Sin is a deceiving power. It always wears a mask. It allures under the semblance of beauty, hiding its serpent length among the roses. 3. Sin is a gradual hardening of the heart. Every fresh act of sin is the shutting up of some pore of moral sensibility. 4. Sin is ineffaceable. The action that is done cannot be undone. 5. Sin is a contagious evil. It affects those about us. II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. Generally the loss of health, life, reputation, friends, the loss of fortitude under trials, consolation in suffering, the loss of peace in a world of strife, the loss of hope in nature's most despairing hour, the loss of a calm assurance at the last. Ponder the recorded judgments of God, this will strengthen your fear of sin. And remember against whom you sin. A God, a merciful God, a Father, a King: against your Redeemer, and the interests of your immortal souls. (*T. J. Judkin, A.M.*) *Plain directions to those who would be saved from sin*.—I. FEEL REVERENT AWE. "Stand in awe." Tremble, and sin not. Awe is not a common emotion nowadays. Men are triflers rather than tremblers. True religion must have a savour of awe about it, for—1. There is a

God, and He is our judge. 2. There is a life to come. Behold that day of wrath when justice will sit upon the throne! II. **THOUGHTFUL SELF-EXAMINATION.** 1. Think of the state of your heart. Are you right with God? 2. Commune with your heart in loneliness and quiet. 3. Think for yourself. 4. Keep on thinking, till you come to be still. III. **APPROACH UNTO GOD ARIGHT.** "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness." Interpret thus, come to God in His own way, as Israel came bringing their sacrifices. They first made confession of sin. Bring the offering which God has divinely appointed and provided. Come to God by faith in Christ; plead His precious blood. IV. **EXERCISE FAITH.** "Put your trust in the Lord." As willing to receive you. As He reveals Himself in Christ. For His Holy Spirit to renew you. For everything. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The duties of religion*.—Religion is to be improved by exercise and application of mind. There is a certain art of virtue. In this art no man was ever so well accomplished as the Psalmist. Here he discovers to us the gradual progress which a good man makes in this art. I. **THE GREAT BUSINESS OF RELIGION IS TO TEACH US NOT TO SIN.** To subdue our unruly lusts, and reduce our troublesome affections, and to bring every rebellious thought into subjection to the will of God; to restore virtue to its proper place, and reason to its due command; and to recover the natural freedom of our will from the tyranny of our passions, and the usurpation of vice. There is nothing of greater moment to us than to form our minds aright, to keep a strict hand upon our manners, and critically to confine ourselves to the paths of life. To correct our extravagance, and to keep us within the bounds of wisdom, is the proper work of religion. In our miserable lost estate, whilst we were tied and bound with the chain of our sins, God in His mercy instituted a holy religion to set us free, and restore us to that paradise of innocence from which we fell. II. **THE WAY NOT TO SIN IS TO "STAND IN AWE."** There is nothing but an awful regard for God, and a just respect for His holy attributes, that can effectually put a restraint upon us, and overrule the violence of our passions. What other design had God in imposing religious worship on us, but that it might bring us to a religious awe, that having God more immediately in our thoughts, and all His holy attributes before our eyes, we might learn to purify ourselves even as He is pure, and to abhor those sins of ours that make us unworthy of His Presence. Fear is now become a necessary qualification in man, not only to preserve his virtue, but to accomplish his nature too. III. **THIS RELIGIOUS AWE IS TO BE WROUGHT IN US BY "COMMUNING WITH OUR OWN HEARTS."** It is a great art and excellence in man to know how to think; to look into the nature of human actions; to weigh well the causes and compare the consequence of things. When God reckons with the world for sin, ignorance may be some excuse, but inconsiderateness is none at all. Whosoever we find ourselves tempted into sin, and see our virtue strongly beset from without, let us retire within our own souls, and see what assistance we can fetch from thence. But we may think we have no leisure for such inquiries. Nothing is so apt to fill as vanity, and no man is more busy than he that has least to do. IV. **IF WE WOULD HAVE THIS "COMMUNION WITH OUR OWN HEARTS" TO BE EFFECTUAL WE MUST "RETIRE INTO OUR CHAMBER AND BE STILL."** There we may learn to compose our thoughts, and bring ourselves to a better temper; give our passions time to cool, and then our affections quickly will be changed. There is nothing like solitude and retirement to recollect our thoughts and make us come unto ourselves, after we have been reduced by conversation and enchanted by the multitude. It is a shameful thing to think how long some men can live and yet never know themselves. When we have prepared and qualified ourselves in private, then we may expect that our public devotion shall be effectual. (*Charles Hickman, D. D.*) **Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.**—*Meditation*.—David seems to have possessed in a remarkable degree both the qualifications for public and the virtues of private life. Vigorous in action, he loved repose. We need seasons of retirement to restore the balance of things and put the claims of heaven in their right order. I. **THE NATURE OF GODLY MEDITATION.** We need not identify the exercise with religious contemplation, that higher form of intellectual homage which the mind, when elevated above the level of earthly things, pays to the wisdom of God. Meditation is contemplation turned within. Meditation is not to be confounded with reading. In meditation we are not learning truths, but applying them. Distinguish also from the ordinary act of prayer. It is the handmaid to prayer. It is not so much a religious act in itself as a preparation for all other religious acts. Meditation is not an act to be learned, but a habit to be formed. We attain expertness by diligent and persevering practice. Much depends on power to govern our thoughts. II. **DAVID INTIMATES THE**



DESIRABLENESS OF SECURING AN OUTWARD SOLEMNITY AND SERIOUSNESS IN THIS EXERCISE. The entire seclusion from all human friendships, the hushing of all voices, both from within and from without, that we may be quite alone with God. There is a sort of holiness in silence. Meditation, to be profitable, must be conducted with a fixed and holy intentness of mind. A close self-scrutiny also is enjoined in the words, "Commune with your own hearts." (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*)

*Self-communion*.—Fond of conversation as we are, few of us converse with our own selves. Men are glad of anything—pleasures, cares, occupations, employments of whatever kinds, that will but step in between them and an uneasy conscience. I. WHAT IS IT TO COMMUNE WITH OUR OWN HEARTS? It is "to examine our lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments," that we may perceive "wherein we have offended, either by will, word, or deed." From day to day, and more especially in his private and solitary moments, the serious man "searches and tries his ways," and makes himself to render in a serious account of his tempers, feelings, and affections. II. USES AND BENEFITS OF THIS SELF-EXAMINATION.

By this means a man arrives at a knowledge of his own character. By this means we attain to a better knowledge of the Saviour—of the preciousness of His salvation. Who can be aware of the value of Christ crucified whilst he conceives he has few sins to be forgiven? Equally does that man rejoice in the blessed offices of God the Holy Spirit, by whose holy inspiration the thoughts of a vile heart are cleansed. Another use of a man's talking with his heart is, that it puts him upon prayer. It is the parent, too, of self-distrust. Such a man may also derive from heart-examination an assurance of sincerity, and that he is indeed a subject of the grace of God. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

*On self-examination*.—Self-communing will produce two most happy effects. 1. It will enable us to judge aright concerning our chief good, and the true character and conduct which we ought to maintain. As perfect goodness is the great original of which every good man's life is a copy, so we cannot judge of the resemblance of the copy without a just apprehension of the original.

We must know all the features of a right mind that, upon comparison, we may discover if those of our own mind bear a likeness to them, or are in any part distorted or unlike, and to what degree this distortion or want of resemblance prevails. To know this we must "commune with our own hearts." God has furnished the heart of man with a teacher and judge of what is right and good for him, and "to commune with our own hearts" is to consult this inward instructor and judge. All revelations from heaven are intended to enlighten this internal judge and monitor. 2. It will most effectually direct and assist us in discovering our defects and vices, and in adjusting our dispositions and actions to the right judgment it has enabled us to form. We must not take it for granted that we are free from faults. But what they precisely are, we cannot know till we have carefully considered our actions, and compared them with the rule of righteousness prescribed by the Almighty, and approved by our own minds. The fear of making mortifying discoveries restrains men from communing with their own hearts, and keeps them unacquainted with their defects, whatever they may be. When we are employed in searching out our vices, there are some of such a nature that we cannot be deceived in them, if they really do belong to us. It is well to consider what are the parts of our character which we wish to conceal from all the world. Thus we shall discover our real faults. Every action of a suspicious nature,—every action which we are afraid to let the world know, ought to undergo the most accurate review. The other things to be brought under review, when communing with our own hearts, are our supposed virtues. Many men are chiefly concerned to gain the reputation of virtue. The favourable opinion of the world, reflected back upon their own minds, establishes in them the imagination that they are really virtuous. Thus their self-deceit becomes more fixed, and harder to be cured. But a mistake here must have a fatal influence on our integrity. . . . Without knowing ourselves, we cannot correct our errors, or become wise, or good, or happy. (*J. Drysdale, D.D.*)

*Self-examination*.—When David said to his enemies, "Commune with your own heart," he seemed to refer them to their better judgment, when their temper was unruffled and their passions not excited. Without supposing any of you under the influence of a hateful, persecuting spirit against true godliness, it may yet, suitably and profitably, be said to every one of you, "Commune with your own heart." The exhortation might be addressed to each distinct class of men. I. THE UNCONVERTED. Why are you unwilling to be called unconverted sinners? What is the reason you are displeased? Be candid with yourself. Does not your displeasure arise from a secret consciousness that the charge is true, and a dislike to be reminded of it? Let me exhort you to

"commune with your own heart." Take counsel now within, and consider with yourselves what is the use of performing a service which God does not accept, nay, that is really offensive to Him; for "the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination unto the Lord"? II. THE CONVERTED. You that know the truth, and serve the Lord Jesus. Some considerations render such an exhortation peculiarly suitable at the present time. 1. The remarkable character of the religion of the present day. It is an age of energy and activity, of zeal and excitement. 2. Satan is ever on the watch to do us harm. Another reason why it is seasonable to exhort you to "commune with your own hearts." You have been invited to receive the sacrament. Self-examination is the constant habit of every Christian. But before we come to that holy feast, we have more than ordinary need to examine ourselves. (*R. W. Dibdin, M.A.*) *Self-communing*:—Communing has been defined as talking together familiarly. Retirement is much more common than self-communion. You may go apart from the crowd, and yet never speak to your own heart. 1. The familiar maxim, "Know thyself," shows that self-knowledge has for ages been deemed desirable. In the ethical codes of the wiser moralists of the ancient world, the duty of self-analysis was prominent. But it is with the heart in its relation to things unseen and eternal that we are to commune. This communing must be marked by uncompromising fidelity. Honesty and impartiality should characterise our inquiries. In our self-communings Scripture should be our guide. When we attempt to explore our vain and wicked hearts, we find that a manual is indispensable to success. That is to be found in the Bible alone. 2. The effect of self-communion. The Psalm is an appeal to God against the misapprehensions of the "sons of men" who love vanity. Their behaviour is founded on a miserable delusion. Some aspects of the stillness to which communion leads. (1) It is the stillness of settled conviction. (2) Of steady growth. (3) Of assured peace. But some men carry these self-communings so far as to destroy the peace they ought to create. They are the victims of an ill-regulated self-analysis. How does this perversion of a devout habit arise? It comes of neglecting to take with us God's own Word, and His Son. Do not neglect this duty of self-communing because you think you have no time for it. "Commune—upon your bed" means, do it anywhere, at any time, in any place, only do it. The heart is a book which you can always read. Let us not be without some places and some seasons at which we commune with our own heart specially, some spot, some hour, in which we can say, "I am alone with God and with myself." (*A. MacEwen, D.D.*) *On religious retirement*:—Though entire retreat would lay us aside from the part for which Providence chiefly intended us, it is certain that, without occasional retreat, we must act that part very ill. There will neither be consistency in the conduct, nor dignity in the character, of one who sets apart no share of his time for meditation and reflection. As he who is unacquainted with retreat, cannot sustain any character with propriety, so neither can he enjoy the world with any advantage. If uninterrupted intercourse with the world wear out the man of pleasure, it no less oppresses the man of business and ambition. The strongest spirits must at length sink under it. Let him who wishes for an effectual cure to all the wounds which the world can inflict, retire from intercourse with men to intercourse with God. Religious retirement is also necessary, in order to prepare us for the life to come. He who lives always in public, cannot live to his own soul. Our conversation and intercourse with the world is, in several respects, an education for vice. Breathing habitually a contagious air, how certain is our ruin, unless we sometimes retreat from this pestilential region, and seek for proper correctives of the disorders which are contracted there? The acts of prayer and devotion, the exercises of faith and repentance, all the great and peculiar duties of the religion of Christ, necessarily suppose retirement from the world. Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion hath, in every age, chosen for her own. There her inspiration is felt, and her secret mysteries elevate the soul. The great and worthy, the pious and virtuous, have ever been addicted to serious retirement. It is the characteristic of little and frivolous minds to be wholly occupied with the vulgar objects of life. A more refined and enlarged mind leaves the world behind it, feels a call for higher pleasures, and seeks them in retreat. Consider some of those great objects which in retirement should employ our thoughts. 1. Commune with your own hearts concerning God. Impressions of Deity, besides their being the principle of what is strictly termed religion, are the great support of all moral sentiment and virtuous conduct among men. Impress deeply on your mind this important truth, that there is, undoubtedly, a Supreme Governor, who presides

over the universe. To commune with ourselves, to any useful purpose, is not to speculate about what is mysterious in the Divine essence, but to contemplate what is displayed by His perfections; to bring home to the soul the internal, authoritative sense of God, as a Sovereign and a Father. Him you are never to confound with the works of His hands. The pious man walks among the various scenes of nature, as within the precincts of a great temple, in the habitual exercise of devotion. 2. Concerning the world. The world is the great deceiver, whose fallacious arts it highly imports us to detect. But, in the midst of its pleasures and pursuits, the detection is impossible. It is only in retreat that the charm can be broken. Will you commune with your heart concerning what the world now is, consider also what it will one day appear to be? Contemplate the world as subject to the Divine dominion. 3. Concerning yourselves, and your real character. Men are generally unwilling to see their own imperfections; and when they are willing to inquire into them, their self-love imposes on their judgment. It is said that there are three characters which every man sustains, and these differ from one another. One which he possesses in his own opinion; one which he carries in the estimation of the world; and a third which he bears in the judgment of God. It is only the last which ascertains what he really is. Whether the character which the world forms of you be above or below the truth, it imports you not much to know. But it is of eternal consequence that the character which you possess in your own eyes, be formed upon that which you bear in the sight of God. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*)

*Self-examination*.—As long as people are going on in a gay, thoughtless, easy way, in good health and spirits, and their minds fully occupied, it is next to impossible that religion should gain any solid and lasting hold on their affections. People go from youth to old age with a shallow, external service, which passes for religion, but which really has nothing of it but the name. When careless, thoughtless persons are brought to a deep sense of the importance of Christian doctrine, they are often inwardly alarmed, but will not confess it even to themselves. They try to fly from it by avoiding serious reflections. But in running from these reflections, they are rejecting the healing medicine afforded by the heavenly Physician. They are advised not to trouble themselves with deep and high speculative questions; to set thought on two things—their own sinfulness and the Divine mercy. Concerning the divinely consolatory warning. 1. You cannot but observe how plain, simple, and unimpassioned, how far from all perplexing notions, and from all rapturous heights and flights of feeling, is the description here given of the repenting convert, the accepted child of God. 2. Notice in what a tone of solemn warning this passage is delivered. "Stand in awe, and sin not." In these words is clearly implied the greatness of our danger, and of our again drawing back to sin. 3. How soothing and consoling is the view here presented to us of our religious state and duties. We are not to harass ourselves with perplexing doubts about our final acceptance, to seek after any special inward convictions, as they are called, of feeling; these, whether right or wrong, are plainly not necessary; but it is necessary that we stand in awe, and sin not, and offer the sacrifices of righteousness; then, and not otherwise, we may with cheerful, though chastened hope, put our trust in the Lord. (*Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

*On communing with the heart*.—I. CONSIDER THE OBLIGATIONS WE ARE UNDER TO CONVERSE WITH OUR OWN HEART IN SECRET. 1. Because we are rational creatures capable of thought and reflection, and the only creatures upon earth capable of religion. Without self-examination, we cannot possibly know ourselves, or what manner of spirit we are of. If we do not know ourselves, we can have no fixed or determined character, but must remain the sport of our own passions, or of those of other men, unconscious of the great end of our existence, and incapable of acting up to it. 2. Retirement is indispensably necessary for the improvement of our minds in useful knowledge, and in that knowledge especially which relates to the life to come. It is absolutely necessary that we cultivate retirement, in order to acquire a taste and a relish for those sublime truths which will hereafter occupy our attention, and delight our minds for ever. II. CONSIDER ADVANTAGES ATTENDING THE FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY. 1. In regard to our happiness in this world. Retirement furnishes an asylum; it draws a wall of separation between us and the scenes without, and hides from our eyes the fashion of a world that passeth away. It is in retirement that we view things as they really are. 2. The chief advantage of religious retirement consists in its loosening our attachment to the objects of sense, and in raising our desires to the things that are above, and thereby assimilating our souls to the



delightful employment and happiness of the heavenly world. This subject will furnish us with a very easy and a very certain criterion by which we may ascertain the state of our hearts towards God. (*James Ross, D.D.*) *Self-fellowship*:—Three thoughts are suggested. I. MAN HAS A SPIRITUAL NATURE. It is here called a “heart.” It stands for our whole spiritual being. 1. We have more proof that the soul is than that the body is. 2. We have an intuitive belief in the existence of the soul; and 3. The Bible most unmistakably reveals it. II. MAN HAS A CAPACITY TO COMMUNE WITH HIS SPIRITUAL NATURE. 1. He can observe all its phenomena; and 2. Trace them to their causative principles. III. HE IS BIDDEN EXERCISE THIS CAPACITY. Would he understand his own nature, let him do this. But yet more for moral purposes. For 1. We know not how evil we are. 2. We must know this ere we can seek that correction which is indispensable. 3. The correction must take place here and now. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Know thyself*:—I. WHAT SHOULD WE COMMUNE ABOUT? 1. Our sins. 2. Our relation to God. 3. Our principles. 4. Our pleasures. II. How? 1. With dependence upon God. 2. With reference to His Word. III. ITS ADVANTAGES. 1. Assistance in the performance of religious duties. 2. Direction in the use of the means of grace. 3. Power over temptations. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *On self-communion*:—I would introduce, must I say, a stranger? to your acquaintance; one whom it infinitely concerns you to know, and to be intimate with. Our text will tell you his name—“commune with your own heart.” I. WHAT IT IS TO COMMUNE WITH OUR OWN HEART. Communication supposes two persons, but here a man’s own heart must supply the place of both. It is what we call soliloquy. It is the soul’s inquiry into and of itself. And it may be either—1. Direct: we can bid our soul ponder our ways. 2. By way of reflection. And this should be ordinary with us; the soul should talk over every occurrence with itself. But sometimes, when there is a more than common call for self-consultation, it should be extraordinary. II. WHAT SHOULD WE THUS COMMUNE ABOUT? 1. About our state; our former state—what we were; and of our present state—what we are. Our first salutation to one another when we meet is, “How d’ye do?”—let this be every man’s first address to himself, “Heart, how dost thou?” Especially if you are living in sin, or walking inconsistently with your Christian profession. And we should converse also about our future—what we are likely to be. Have we a good hope, or are we in danger of hell? 2. About sin. 3. Duty. III. WHEN SHOULD WE COMMUNE WITH OUR OWN HEARTS? When should we not? We cannot do it too often. But more especially—1. When we are most at leisure. 2. When the conscience is in any way awakened. 3. When we are under any particular trouble. “In the day of adversity consider” (*Eccles. vii. 14*). 4. When we engage in the solemn duties of religion. 5. The Lord’s day. 6. When we are in the immediate prospect of death. IV. WHY SHOULD WE DO THIS? Because—1. God commands it. A good man who had a wild and wicked son, whom neither tears nor entreaties nor threatenings could reclaim, left it as his dying charge to his son, and gave him an estate expressly upon this condition, that he should spend half an hour every day alone. The good man died; and the next day, the young prodigal, rather than lose his fortune, shuts himself up. But what an age did the first half-hour seem! How impatiently did he count the slow-moving minutes; and, as soon as ever they had gone, joyfully haste away to his gay companions. Sometimes he would spend the time in fretting at or ridiculing this odd command of his father. “What could he mean by it?” (at length he began to think); “he was always kind, and could never design to vex me. And yet what good can I get by sitting here moping and musing? I begin to grow melancholy already.” However, he persevered, in obedience to the will; and at length it pleased God to give his mind such a thoughtful turn, that he came to long for the half-hour as much as formerly he dreaded it. He was led on from step to step, until he became a serious and exemplary Christian. Now God hath as positively enjoined on us this duty (2 Cor. xiii. 5; Gal. vi. 4). Then, think—2. The thing itself is reasonable. What should we think of a man who was hardly ever at home, sauntering up and down all the day long, and letting his own affairs be neglected? 3. And it is useful also. It prevents waste of time. Helps to improve ends of time. Saves from many snares. Makes us thrive in grace. 4. And necessary. V. HOW MUST WE THUS COMMUNE? 1. Seriously. 2. Particularly. 3. Resolutely. 4. Rightly—do not judge yourself by a false measure. Weigh your actions and thoughts in the balance of the sanctuary (2 Cor. x. 12, 13). But some of you will not do this, and the reason is—you are afraid. And yet you must die. Is it not better, then, to obey, and hear what your heart will say?

(*G. Lavington.*) And be still.—*The excitements of the age as they affect religion:—*We live in an age of excitement and unrest. How often brain and heart alike give way in the midday! It very naturally follows that these dancing waves of excitement break into the sacred quietudes of religion. Reverence is not superstition. As Creator, we know by faith that God made the worlds; and, as Redeemer, we know, by faith too, that the Christ works within us, as the Absolver from guilt, and the Saviour from sin. We thus revere God, and such reverence is the root of all religion. Our Saviour, in His human experience, knew much of solitude, and quiet, and worship. There is less of holy meditation and calm, thoughtful worship, than in the old times before us. And, consequently, our religious life must lose that mellowness which comes from the quiet touch of the sunbeam, and the still air of the garden. The text suggests—I. HOW LITTLE WE KNOW OF OURSELVES. We have been surfeited with counsels concerning the dangers of introspection. But there is still need to “watch and pray,” to “look to ourselves,” to “examine ourselves.” This no one can do for us. We may become morbid analysts of moods and experiences. But how seldom do we even seek to become, in any true sense, acquainted with ourselves. There is no unexplored continent less known to us than the wonderful land within us. By “commune with your own hearts” is meant, make inquiry concerning its health and its energy, its growth and its godliness. II. HOW MUCH WE NEED SOLITUDE. “Upon your bed.” There, where you are removed from the garish light of day. Upon our bed we have seen visions of ourselves and God which have melted us to gratitude, and moved us to tears of penitence and joy. There are places in men’s hearts “which only hear the foot of conscience at the dead of night.” III. HOW MUCH WE NEED STILLNESS. This brings us to the centre of our subject. We need quiet hours. We are too much in society. In still hours we learn what cowards we really are; how often we are afraid to be ourselves, and to speak and act out the truth that is in us. In still hours we learn how much Christ is to us. In still hours we learn how little anything outward can really affect us. We live more and more in what we are. In still hours we learn the value of true friends. We see that the Christlike in men is that which alone is truly to be loved and honoured. Still hours! How seldom they come to us! Should we not seek to have more? And should not our religious service itself be characterised by a greater devoutness and reverence? (*W. M. Statham.*) *Alone with God:—*There is no religion, no praise, no worship, but of the individual. The text is what must be said to every single, solitary person. It addresses him in the most solitary, silent time—when his day’s work is done, and he is going to sleep. God spreads the curtain of darkness round about us, just that He may shut Himself in with His child. It is not bodily stillness alone. That is compelled. You cannot help going to sleep, God makes you. If it were not for this bodily sleep, we should all go mad. If there never be a silence in the soul, and a man goes on always with his own thoughts and schemes and endeavours, it brings about a moral and spiritual madness. It is not in the midst of the tumult of life that a man first of all is able to hear God. We have not got up to Jesus Christ yet; God was always with Him. So He is with us, but Jesus knew it and felt. But even He went out to the mountains at night, that there might be nothing between Him and God. I think God has sometimes great trouble in separating us far enough from Himself that He can look round and know us. It is the most natural thing that God and man should meet, and know and understand each other, that there should be the meeting together of the thought of the One with the thought of the other. If we do not do the will of God in the day, it is not likely that we will be still upon our beds that He may come and visit us. We need not be without Him during the day. Let us be jealous over ourselves. God will be readier to come to His child the next night if, during the day, he has been living childlike, walking in the steps of his Father, holding fast by Him. The one eternal, original, infinite blessing of the human soul is when in stillness the Father comes and says, “My child, I am here.” (*George Macdonald, LL.D.*) *Solitary reflection:—*I. EXPLAIN MEANING OF TEXT. It is to ponder the matter over with ourselves. The wicked love not to do this. Note the place—your bed; the time—at night, when all is still. It is well to examine our actions, but best, the heart. Ask of it such questions as these: 1. Does it choose and follow after these things which conscience tells me to be right? 2. Is my conscience instructed and informed by the Word of God? 3. Have any of, or all of, my pursuits ever yet afforded me satisfaction? 4. Will the course I am in do to die with? 5. If I should die in an unconverted state, can I endure the wrath of an offended God?

II. ENFORCE ITS EXHORTATION. Because—1. There are things you have doubted, but which, if you would commune with your own heart, you would find to be true. 2. Things which you have objected to, which you would see to be unobjectionable. 3. One reason why you know so little of your heart sins is that you commune with it so little. 4. There are things which you value much which you would see to be worthless. (*Andrew Fuller.*)

Ver. 5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*—*Sacrifice and trust*:—What are we to understand by this expression, “The sacrifices of righteousness”? 1. By way of specification. The sacrifices of righteousness are righteous sacrifices, sacrifices and oblations under the law. The sacrifice of contrition and humiliation. The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The sacrifice of alms and charitable contributions. The exercise and practice of righteousness. To offer the sacrifices of righteousness is to be abundant in acts of justice and equity, and righteousness betwixt man and man. 2. By way of modification or qualification, as to the manner of performance. In a righteous manner; from a righteous principle, to a righteous end. In faith, in obedience, in humility. Notice the privilege of all true Christians under the gospel. Sacrifice is not now confined to any particular place. It is performed with less difficulty. The Christian sacrifices are sanctified by the sacrifice of Christ, who has offered Himself up for us. Take the second sentence of the text, “Put your trust in the Lord.” This is a duty by itself. Faith in God is required, together with righteousness to men. Look at this duty in its connection with the first sentence, “Offer the sacrifices.” A double force in this—as the sacrifices are preparatory, and disposing to this trust; and as this trust qualifies and regulates those sacrifices. The best ground of our trust is the free mercy of God in Christ. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *The sacrifices of righteousness*:—Taking the language of the text in its most rigid meaning, estimating our sacrifices of righteousness by the perfect rule originally given to us,—and remembering that God cannot receive anything less valuable without violating the faithfulness, and compromising the purity of His character,—we have no sacrifices to offer to Him which will justify us in expecting that, for the sake of these, we shall regain and enjoy any of those blessings which His goodness ever prompts Him to bestow upon His rational offspring, as constituting at once their honour and their happiness. Still, we are commanded to offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and we are encouraged to trust in the Lord. The two things must be consistent. It must be practicable for us, fallen though we be, to do both the one and the other. 1. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, by cherishing those sentiments of humility and sorrow which become creatures who have lost their righteousness; and trust in the Lord, that if you do so, He will comfort you, and lift you up. Humility and sorrow, it is true, cannot compensate for the want of righteousness. They amount to a recognition of that want. Humility and sorrow answer the purpose assigned them, as being a heartfelt testimony on the part of the transgressor to the infinite excellence of God’s law, and to the fitness and importance, and necessity, of that obedience which it demands. In this there is a tribute paid to the authority of God. Presenting this sacrifice of righteousness, you need not be afraid of your offering being rejected or disdained. 2. By a believing application to the obedience of Christ, as constituting that righteousness for the sake of which God justifies the ungodly. Our humility, however deep, and our sorrow, however sincere, come far short of what God’s law requires of us. And so must all the best affections, and all the worthiest doings, of which we are capable. It is the grand object of the gospel dispensation to provide for us that righteousness of which we are naturally destitute, but which, nevertheless, the holiness and immutability of God’s law render absolutely necessary. This provision has been made by appointing Christ as our surety and substitute. In what manner does the righteousness of Christ become ours, so that we may offer it as a sacrifice to God, and trust in Him, that, for its sake, He will forgive and bless us? It is appropriated by faith, by that faith which implies a renunciation of all dependence on our own inherent righteousness as the instituted method of justification. We offer to God the sacrifice of this righteousness when we direct our views to it, and place our confidence in it. 3. By an earnest desire and uniform endeavour to be adorned with the graces of personal righteousness. Personal righteousness is absolutely, and in every case, indispensable. Strive and pray that your offering may be cheerful, unreserved, and constant. Thus offering the sacrifices of righteousness, you may trust in the Lord that your offering shall not be in vain.



4. By striving to promote the interests of righteousness among your fellow-men. No doubt our principal concern is to be holy ourselves. But if we are sincere in that work, we will be anxious that our neighbours shall be holy in the same manner, and to the same extent, and will make every exertion that may be requisite for attaining that end. And explicit obligation is laid upon us to aim at the suppression of sin, and at the prosperity of virtue among our fellow-creatures. As to the means by which you are to promote this object, it must strike you at once that the grand and efficient means of diffusing righteousness is to be found in the diffusion of Christianity. Christianity is a system of righteousness. If you would secure for Christianity its purifying effects in their best style, and in their fullest measure, you must present it to men in its true and native character, as it has been set forth by God Himself. And you must exhibit its purifying influence on your own deportment. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. There be many that say, Who will show us any good?—*Seeking for good*:—Truth and happiness go together, like light and heat in the sun. God is the fountain of blessedness, because He is the Father of lights; so that the only proper answer to the question, "Who will show us any good?" is, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." I. THE QUESTION. They who ask such a question are not happy. They have some secret cause of dissatisfaction and disquietude. There is a great blank in their moral life; a part of their very nature is left unprovided for. But they want something shown to them, something that their senses can appreciate. Yet they neglect to seek good in God. What is the true good, and who can show it to us? What is the true good with regard to our present happiness? One seeks it in the pleasures of the mind; another in the honours, dignities, and applause of his fellow-men; others in wealth, ease, and competence, in prosperous schemes, and golden harvests, and plenteous stores. But these, in themselves, prove disappointing. What is the good which God shows us? The light of His countenance, so that heart to heart, and face to face, we may continue with the invisible God. How is this true good to be obtained? II. THE IMPLIED ANSWER TO THE QUESTION. The good man will not be satisfied with "any" good; he must have the chief good, the best good—living water, not water from the cistern. A sense of reconciliation with God, of a granted pardon from Him, of a realised covenant engagement with Him. The chief good is thus described, to "do justly," "to love mercy," "to walk humbly with thy God." (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *The natural man's choice*:—No natural or unregenerate man can lift up his heart any higher than unto a worldly happiness, and content in the creature. When you have, in the most powerful and moving manner, discovered spiritual duties, and the necessity of conversion to God, yet they matter it not; they will say, "Who will show us any good?" To bring this coal of fire into your bosom, consider several propositions. 1. Herein lieth the general character of these two citizens—one builds up Babylon, the other builds up Jerusalem. The whole world consists of two sorts of men—the one who are of the world; the other, though in the world, yet not of it. Every wicked man makes some creature or other to be as a God, and so the ultimate end, to him. To clear the heinousness of this wretched temper, consider, 2. That all the good things which the creatures do afford unto us, they are but as means to carry us to a further end. They are but as the rounds of a ladder, not to stand upon, but thereby to ascend higher, even to heaven. 3. Take notice that there is a higher and grosser sort of unregenerate men than happily this expression will comprehend, and that is those who make such things as are formally and expressly evil the good things they would have showed to them. Such are all gross and profane sinners, who live in the daily practice of some loathsome sin. 4. The schoolmen do well to place in every sin a twofold respect; there is the aversion from God, and the conversion to the creature. 5. It is acknowledged by all that there is inbred in a man an appetite or desire after felicity and happiness. There were above a hundred opinions amongst the heathen in what true felicity consists: but though some were not so gross as others, yet all come short of the true end. 6. The persuasion of what is the best good, and which is chiefly to be desired, is wonderfully diversified, according to the several inclinations, humours, and conditions of men. 7. The preferring of the creature above God, though it be the sin of all mankind, and as large as original sin itself, yet, like that, is hardly discerned and discovered. Antidotes and means against this creature-affection. (1) You cannot address yourselves unto God in prayer while your heart is not above the world. (2) Thy heart; it is

the choicest and chiefest treasure about thee; it is too noble for any creature. (3) Meditate on this—that all those who ever loved the creature immoderately, have at last found the vanity and unprofitableness of it. (4) God hath mingled gall with the honey of every creature, and therefore it is that everything is obtained with difficulty, and possessed with cares, so that we might not rest in the creature. (5) These creatures, whatever they are for comfort, they are not originally and of themselves so, but are only instruments and conduit pipes. They are defective in these particulars. They cannot give any comfort or content of themselves. They cannot fill themselves with any comfort objectively, any further than God puts into them. They are streams that have water no longer than the spring filleth them. The creature, in being but an instrument, and having all from God, doth thereby demonstrate how much blessedness is in enjoying God Himself. (6) Lay this to heart, heaven and glory cannot be obtained without a pre-eminent and transcendent affection to all other things. (7) Neglect not this meditation—what heathen and superstitious persons have done in a misguided way for some notable end. (8) If Christ hath reproved those who were godly for their external cares, how much rather will He condemn those who are immoderately addicted to these things? (*Anthony Burgess.*) *The different language of the godly and the ungodly descriptive of their different characters:*—Scripture divides mankind into two classes, godly and ungodly. They differ as to their actual state in relation to the law and favour of God, and in their real character in the dispositions and affections of the soul. In this text we see how different are the prevailing desires of godly and ungodly men. I. THE LANGUAGE OF WORLDLY AND UNCONVERTED MEN. "Who will show us any good?" All pursue the object which appears to them good. But it is only some worldly good. "Corn and wine." In their search, of whom do they seek information? Only of men like themselves; of men who are following worldly objects. Many of the things after which worldly men inquire are lawful. The degree in which it is done often makes the inquiry unlawful. They pursue it inordinately. This is the circumstance which clearly marks their characters, and decidedly proves them to be worldly. II. THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. The very form which the language takes points out a marked distinction. It is a prayer, not a question. This has always been a marked feature in the people of God. They are a people who pray. They attempt nothing and desire nothing, apart from prayer. Here, for what objects do they pray? 1. For the Lord's countenance; for His special approbation and love. 2. For the light of His countenance. Not only the possession of God's favour, but the enjoyment of it. Conclusion: 1. You who are walking "in the light of His countenance," be thankful for the great mercy vouchsafed to you. 2. Be watchful. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (*E. Cooper.*) *The cry of the many, and the prayer of the few:*—I. THE CRY OF THE MANY. Humanity is little changed in its characteristics from what it was in David's days. 1. This is the cry of destitution. 2. Of bitter disappointment. 3. Of sensuousness. 4. Of recklessness. 5. Of despair. II. THE PRAYER OF THE FEW. 1. It is directed to the proper source. 2. It supplicates the highest blessing. Show us Thy favour. Regard us with approval and complacency. Let us know ourselves the objects of Thy love. (*C. M. Merry.*) *The inquirer after happiness guided:*—All seek after happiness of some kind or other. Yet there is nothing in which men more generally fail. There must then be an error somewhere. I. THE LANGUAGE OF THE WORLD, AS EXPRESSED IN THIS TEXT. There are in the world mistaken inquirers after happiness, and they are many. More seek it in the wrong way than in the right. These wrong inquirers are all dissatisfied—Solomon, Colonel Gardiner, Lord Byron, Cardinal Wolsey. These inquirers after happiness are ignorant of the only real source of joy. They never seek it where it can be found. They will not seek their happiness in God. The happiness of these men is evanescent. Supposing that they are happy, their happiness does not last. II. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE STATE OF THE WORLDLY MAN, AND THE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN. The Christian's joy is a specific joy; it is a joy immediately and directly derived from God. It is a satisfying joy. It is unaffected by external circumstances. It is an everlasting joy. (*George Weight, B.A.*) *The influence of Christianity in the heart, in the home, and in society:*—It may be asked whether the truth of Christianity necessarily follows from its joy-giving power. Such a proof is only a part of the cumulative evidence whereupon Christianity is built. There is a further and more serious objection. Are you not, by showing that religion promotes joy, appealing to motives of abject fear and personal profit?

Morality, not pleasure, should be the true end of religion. But it is just because Christianity has holiness for its object that it is able to promise the happiness which holiness involves. It does indeed appeal to hope and fear; but the fear and the hope which it invokes are not selfish; not, certainly, in that invidious sense which implies the wrong or the neglect of others. Nor can it be said for a moment that the Christian's fear or joy ignores the claims of morality. Why, the very conviction of sin upon which such a fear is based recognises the breach of a moral law. That same fear becomes ennobled in its onward course, being daily transfigured from the dread of offending a righteous judge into the filial fear of offending a loving Father. And as with the Christian's fear, so with his joy and his hope. Even in its beginning, it involves a recognition of moral law, and it daily tends to further holiness. Both the Christian's fear and joy are essentially moral in their character. But it may be asked—Is this joy really attainable? and if attainable, is it of any value? "Is life worth living?" Christless pessimism is a natural oscillation from a Christless optimism: in other words, to look for true joy in the heart, the home, or society, except as the outcome of true religion, is to build up hopes that can only end in despair. What has Christianity to offer in the place of Christless optimism? What are the virtues and the accompanying joys to which it invites us? It would be untrue to assert that morality and happiness cannot exist in any degree apart from Christianity. And we must not assume that Christianity has promised to bring about, in this dispensation at least, universal goodness, or universal happiness. Let us not look for more than has been promised. Take 1. The heart-joys of the individual Christian. Christianity intensifies the joys that are common to all; there are some joys that are peculiarly her own. Such as, the power to dispel those foul vapours which, as our Lord tells us, come naturally from within, and which are necessarily destructive of all inward joy. True religion also offers the joy of pardon. But the heart-joy of the Christian does not end with pardon. There is the still greater and holier joy which he feels in the consciousness of being an object of love and care to a heavenly Father, a sympathising Saviour, an abiding Comforter. 2. The home-joys of the Christian. In the eyes of the Christian the very idea of home has a holy and Divine meaning that reaches far beyond its earthly significance. He has before his eyes the revelation of an Eternal Father and a Divine Son. True religion enjoins, with a terrible earnestness, those sacred obligations on the observance of which the happiness of home depends; and true religion provides a further home-joy in its truth of resurrection. 3. The society-joys of the Christian. True religion tends to promote joy in society. The chief source of happiness in a community is liberty, and a chief friend of liberty is true religion. What are the features which give special peace and happiness to the social circle? Are they not courtesy and unselfishness? Are not these Christian virtues? In conclusion, face this question. If Christianity be a failure, what do you propose to put in its place? (*Archbishop Plunket, D.D.*) *The Cynic's query answered*:—The Cynics were a sect of Greek philosophers founded by Antisthenes. He was a proud, stern, and unfeeling man, of such a snarling temper as to be named "dog," *kynos*, and his school, "the dog school." He appeared in threadbare attire and was reproved by Socrates, who told him that his pride spoke through the holes of his clothes. His follower, Diogenes, outdistanced him, and appeared at noonday with a lantern, seeking, as he pretended, to find a man. When Alexander compassionately asked him on one occasion, "What can I do for you?" he replied, "Stand out of my sunlight." He was an incarnate sneer. "Who will show us any good? Is there any good? Are we not all dupes of delusions?" The text answers the scorner's query—"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." We learn that there is good. It can be unfolded and recognised. God is its root, blossom, and fruit. The Cynic is silenced. Satire has its place and function. It may cut to cure, may lacerate yet heal, may lash popular vices and effect good. But satire is earnest, while cynicism is not. Let us, therefore, look at this good which may be defended. Life is not a blunder. It is not a mirage, a stream that runs on only to be buried in sand. Good we can define and know it sharply. It can be made a part of ourselves, and we thereby be made rich and strong. We are not drifting clouds floating away to melt into nothingness. Human life may be opulent, and human destiny glorious. 1. THIS GOOD WE ARE TO THINK ABOUT IS PERSONAL. It is something realisable, actual, to be recognised by us all. The genesis of it is in God. God is the Saxon word for good. It is in the light of His countenance that we are to realise the possession of genuine good. God does not throw at us as a king in his chariot may fling coin to



the crowd about him, but enriches us by reason of our likeness and affinities with Him. We are His children. The paternity of God broods over each life and blesses it. Supposing on one of these spring days there was held a council of the trees and grasses, and each leafless tree and spire of grass should say, "We must have the sun, the dewfall and the rain if we are to live. We must have not one warm shower, but many, if we are to lead on the beauty and bounty of summer. Are we certain of these things?" The sun whispers to each, "I will not forget you, but speak the word to the sea, which shall give of its waters to the cloud, and the cloud shall drop the rain. The dew shall also come, and I, the sun, the father of the earth, will shine upon you. Fear not, I will care for you." But is not God the primal force, the unseen Creator? He speaks by sun and sea, by cloud and dew. So in the moral world He is the atmosphere in which we are to live. Warmed by His light we shall rejoice and bring forth fruit. II. NOTICE THE FORM WHICH THIS GOOD HAS TAKEN. God's beneficence is incarnated. Its concrete form is the living Christ. He is the answer to the query, "Who will show us any good?" He, the express image of God, meets man's spiritual nature perfectly, shining into and enriching it as the sun vitalises and fructifies the earth. This higher nature needs Divine ennobling. We live in the lower too much. We materialise ourselves too much and forget our spiritual selfhood to which the abiding good must minister. He comes, not as a transient, but perennial supply; not to a transient need, but to our permanent wants as immortal beings. It is not food or raiment which we most need. Christ gives character. If that be built up in man he is a recognised child of God. It is not an easy work, the toil of a day, but that which requires earnest endeavour so long as life shall last. There are endless possibilities in each of us. What possibilities with God indwelling! A good man is a God-man. This is the grand outcome. He dwelleth in us. When then the peering, muttering cynic comes groping round with his lantern asking, "Who will show us any good?" our answer is, A GOOD MAN! III. HOW IS SUCH A GOODNESS BUILT? Only through the same line that Christ passed Himself. Every noble soul grows into other lives. Goodness grows by giving itself away. A good life is a great argument. As the sun streams into a dark cloud and washes out its gloom, clothing it with splendour, so does the Sun of Righteousness shine into a human life and make it glorious with the Divine lustre of the heavenly life. IV. GOD IN CHRIST TAKES HOLD OF THE WHOLE OF US, AND THE POSSESSION IS PERPETUAL. (*J. Wesley Davis, D.D.*) *The quest for good*.—The quest for good is a perplexing one. Its sources, like the Nile's, are not easily found. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" Good in the highest sense is not the natural heritage of man. Youth with its brightness is a very short season; the burden and heat of the day come very soon; old age with its decrepitude and weakness hovers not far off. Even the best earthly lot does not satisfy. I. THERE IS DISSATISFACTION AND INQUIRY. Alone of all the creatures, man seems to have an ill-fitting lot; and alone of all the creatures, he is conscious of his misery. Very wretched according to our standard is the life of the worm that crawls in the damp earth, or the mole that burrows blind and cold in the ground; still more wretched are the lives of those animals that riot in putridity and fatten on corruption: but whatever their lot may appear to us, they are conscious of no want, and may quite contentedly fulfil the ends of their being. It is otherwise with man. He is not in his right place; he is not "in harmony with his surroundings"; he was meant to be happier. The bee is quite satisfied gathering its honey; the sheep is quite pleased nibbling the green meadow; the swallow desires nothing better than to skim the summer air, and build its nest and rear its young under the eaves of the old castle, and be off again in winter to the sunny south. Of all creatures, man alone feels that his lot is not satisfactory. In his nature alone there is an unsatisfied longing. He is ever on the alert to hear of "good," in case it be the thing that will allay his craving. But commonly he looks in the wrong direction. Are there any instances of true repose and satisfaction of soul obtained from the broken cisterns? It is not on what men *have*, but on what they *are*, that their true happiness depends. And men cannot be what they should be till they come to Christ. "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst!" II. THERE ARE VARIOUS ANSWERS. How poor and unsatisfying are the answers often given to the quest for good! "I have been reading such an amusing book," says one, "a very delightful tale; do get hold of it, you will enjoy it so much." "Have you been to such and such an entertainment?" asks another; "it is so superior to

anything of the kind." Or, taking some of the answers given in a somewhat different sphere of life—one tells of a market where commodities are got cheap; another of an improvement in the management of his business; and another of a way of making the house more snug, or the person more comfortable or more comely. The advertisements of the newspapers, the prospectuses of new companies, the circulars of tradesmen, the critiques of reviewers, the arguments of politicians, are all in their way answers to the question, "Who will show us any good?" All very well in their way and in their place; but very miserable surely if there is no higher level of good—no higher region to which the soul may aspire. III. **THE TRUE ANSWER.** The Psalmist tacitly puts all these aside; one blessing, and one only, fills his eye and his heart; and it deserves our best attention—"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." It was common among the Hebrews to speak of a person's countenance as low or fallen when he was grieved or angry, and as lifted up when he was pleased and happy. We hold down our face when we are dejected, we hold it up when we are glad. So, also, a radiant or shining countenance stands opposed to a dark or gloomy one. The lights of the countenance, the eyes, sparkle in the one case, and are dull in the other. The two emblems are combined in the request to God to lift up the light of His countenance on us. The thought is, "Look on us with a happy, shining face—with the happy, shining face with which Thou didst look on our Elder Brother, when Thy voice was heard from the clouds, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Transfer to us the satisfaction which Thou hast for Him; accept us in the Beloved. Transform our hearts into His image; make us to resemble Him, 'the firstborn among many brethren.'" If only we are in a right relation to the Son of God, the countenance of the Father is sure to be lifted up. Has the light of God's countenance never yet been lifted up on some one? Why should it not? "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses." We are His ambassadors entreating you to be reconciled! And the way to all good is so open and so glorious. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D., LL.D.*) *The inquirers after good:*—Various as are the tastes and pursuits of mankind, all are pursuing one object—to be happy. But what is true happiness, and where is it to be found? There are two classes of mankind. I. **THE CLASS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.** 1. They are numerous. Not confined to persons of any particular age or station. 2. The nature of this restless inquiry is shown in the question itself. The question is thrown out to the whole world, to the good and the bad, to the wise and the ignorant, that each may answer it as he sees fit. How various and inconsistent are the answers made! 3. Not only are persons thus restlessly inquiring, but their expectations of finding satisfaction in it are constantly disappointed. They are perpetually trying new experiments, but always with the same result. II. **CAN ANY SATISFYING GOOD BE FOUND?** Our text furnishes the answer. God's favour, the light of His countenance, His presence, His protection, these are satisfying good. God is indeed the source of all good. Then why do not all men seek happiness in God? The temptations to make the world our portion are ever at hand, and press upon us; they appeal to our senses and appetites; they present themselves according to our ages and circumstances in life, in the various forms of profit, pleasure, or worldly distinction, and exhibit innumerable allurements adapted to every taste. Mankind, having forsaken God, find a painful void which the manifestations of His favour alone can fill. (*Christian Observer.*) *The open secret, or the world's cry and Heaven's answer:*—I. **THE WORLD'S CRY.** With the question, as such, no fault is to be found, seeing it is natural to man. But the questioners are of varied type. 1. The unrestrained sensualist. 2. The orderly, selfish, even tempered, moral, prudential worldling, against whom society can bring no positive charge, but from whom it can expect no conscious benefit. 3. The striving and ambitious, whose ruling passion is acquisitiveness. 4. The recluse student, calculator, book-worm, who gives his life to the pursuit of knowledge. Many of them are martyrs of science. "Oh," cried one, "for a century to study a grain of sand, or a blade of grass!" "More light!" exclaimed the dying Goethe. But many and potent as are the charms of science, if pursued as a chief aim, it can only end in disappointment. 5. There is the agnostic, and the insatiable man of action, whose delight is in adventure, discovery, heroic achievement, social influence. 6. There is the type æsthetic, the worshipper of the beautiful in literature and art. But the beautiful alone can never satisfy. II. **HEAVEN'S ANSWER.** It is the light of God's countenance that will fill our hearts with gladness and peace. This "good" is—1. Universally accessible to the earnest seeker. A certain writer speaks of "youth

as a blunder, manhood a labour, and old age a regret." God could not have meant that they should be so. 2. Enduring. 3. Adequate. 4. Without it nothing else can be of real use to us. Classical story tells of a philosopher, who was admitted to a grand merry-making of the Celestials. He was informed that, among the noble and majestic forms around him, there was one, and only one, earth-born like himself. He was asked whether, looking at them in all the pomp of royalty, he could pick out his fellow-mortal. Contrary to expectation, there was not the slightest difficulty. Though enthroned among gods, and though, like them, he carried a sceptre, and wore golden sandals, and a purple fillet, and talked and nodded as divinely, the man was instantly and unmistakably detected by the restlessness of his eye. That is a profoundly melancholy, and yet a triumphantly suggestive allegory. "Rest!" exclaimed Peter of Russia to his jaded soldiers; "you will have rest enough in the grave." Is that all? Have we no "parish rights" anywhere in the universe? Yes, there is a love if you will but accept it, a power which, if you yield to it, will make this earth the very gate of heaven. (*R. Griffith, F.G.S.*)

*The difference between worldly and godly men.*—I. THE UNRENEWED MEN SEEK FOR HAPPINESS IN WORLDLY ENJOYMENTS. 1. The frequency of this conduct. The disposition of mind, expressed in this inquiry, belongs to every man until, by renewing grace, he is enabled to set his affection on things above. It is the language of their hearts, their lips, and their actions. There is, indeed, a great variety of objects that engage their attention and pursuit. 2. The foolishness of their conduct. Though desirous to enjoy good, they apply not to God, who alone can give that which is good. Thus they show that they are under the influence of corrupt passions, and wish to live, if it were possible, independent of God. 3. The dangerousness of their conduct. The creatures are unable to help you in your greatest extremities when you most need assistance. This practice entails upon them that follow it certain misery and woe. It gives to the creatures the glory and honour which is due to the Creator. II. THE GRACIOUS, GODLY MAN ESTEEMS THE FAVOUR OF GOD ABOVE EVERY EARTHLY ENJOYMENT. When men are reconciled to other men, they view them with complacency and delight. Any good will not satisfy the godly man's desires; the wealth of the world cannot make a portion for his immortal soul. The "light of God's countenance" includes—1. God's reconciled favour and love. 2. A sense of its excellence and sweetness. 3. Experience of its joyful fruits and effects. All the temporal and spiritual mercies proceed from God's favour and goodwill. (*W. McCulloch.*) *Of the nature and pursuit of good.*—This question forms the complaint of many sinful, or mistaken men. 1. It may be asked by the misanthropist. Whatever such persons contemplate is viewed, not only with an expectation, but an intention, to spy out imperfection or deformity. Habits of moroseness and suspicion will contaminate the purest actions. 2. Another vain inquirer after good is the sceptic, and minute philosopher. Surrounded with mists, or dazzled with excess of light, they can never see their way clearly. Every question begets a string of possibilities. Such persons often enter into tedious and perplexed labyrinths of thought, which terminate in no practical result. 3. Another is the voluptuary, and the mere man of the world. Those who, at their first outset, so far mistake the road, as to suppose that the gratifications of sense, or the vanities of ambition, can constitute the happiness of a creature that was formed for immortality, must, in a short time, expect to be disappointed. The pleasures of novelty soon grow familiar, and those of appetite are quickly cloyed. 4. The melancholy inquiry may express the desponding complaint of those who have suffered much, and who seem to sorrow without hope. We are all children of discipline, passing through this land of shadows into a state of immortality, in which we must give account of the things done in the body. Let me advise everybody, who feels this evil doubt and despondency gathering round his mind, to approach the throne of grace with the short but energetic prayer of the holy Psalmist, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." (*J. Hewlett, B.D.*) *The cry of the heart.*—Life is not all a thing of beauty. If we listen to a Psalm, it may have as many hearse-like harmonies as notes of gladness. The minor rapidly succeeds the major. Weariness is implied in this cry of the human heart. There is social, political, religious unrest. But let us thank God that it is as it is. This despair, this conflict between right and wrong, this struggle after the true way, all these tell of the grandeur and nobility of our nature. These very longings carry along with them assurances of satisfaction; these desires prophesy fruition. They tell the story of the soul's fatherhood,—it was made for God; and He who formed the soul alone can fill it. Thus we have reached back to the Infinite at last.



Oh, that I knew where I might find rest ! Oh, for a living, loving, personal God ! The heart must have something to love ; something whereon to rest ; something in which to trust. God is not an abstraction, but a very present Help. Not afar off, but close at hand. Not merely love, but the Loving One. Not cold Omnipotence, but the Helping One. A being who rewards personal longings with personal gifts ; personal cravings with personal sympathy. All this we find in the dear Christ of the Cross. He will show thee, O man, what is good. Trouble may now and then ruffle the fringes of your outer life, but the life hidden with Christ in God shall never be stirred by the winds and waves of earthly care. Founded upon the Rock, you shall never, never be moved. (*John Hemphill.*)

*The general depression* :—Beneath the conventional smiles and cheerful salutations of society there lie heavy burdens on many hearts, and there may be heard "groanings which cannot be uttered." There is on every side a great deal of care amounting to anxiety, and of depression bordering on melancholy. At present, the troubles of our fellow-men are heavy indeed, through the mere struggle for existence. Another cause of the general depression is the sickness which abounds. This has been a very unhealthy season. Another great sorrow is the perpetual exile of grown-up sons into distant lands. Add the trouble endured through domestic servants, and through bad children. There are unhappy souls who live in a perpetual atmosphere of melancholy, who, whatever be their circumstances, habitually look only on the dark side of things, and seem unable to do otherwise. See the exquisite beauty, and simplicity, and reasonableness of the remedy for trouble which the Psalmist recommends. His remedy is prayer. But prayer for what ! He does not pray for the removal of one of life's burdens, for the reversal of one of God's decrees, or for the smallest interference on God's part with the conditions in which we find ourselves. It is a prayer only for the light of God's countenance to shine upon our souls. That is the only good worth showing or giving. That is the panacea for all life's ills. That gives strength to carry the burden, instead of taking the burden away. That gives courage to face our danger, instead of taking the danger out of our path. That is the only cure in heaven or earth for depression of mind. "The light of God's countenance" is a way of expressing the soul's vision of God—seeing Him, and knowing that He sees us. Some of us may drill ourselves into a hardened stoicism. That is not happiness, it is death. Many think to be happy by the removal of their present troubles. It is a mistake. In trouble man learns that he needs God. In his darkest hours man has seen the brightest visions of the ineffable glory. (*Charles Voysey.*)

*A restless quest of satisfaction* :—There is said to be a strange plant in South America which finds a moist place and sends its roots down and becomes green for a little while until the place becomes dry, when it draws itself out and rolls itself up and is blown along by the wind until it comes to another moist place, where it repeats the same process. On and on the plant goes, stopping wherever it finds a little water, until the spot is dry ; then in the end, after all its wanderings, it is nothing but a bundle of dry roots and leaves. It is the same with those who drink only of this world's springs. They drink and thirst again, blown by the winds of passion and desire, and at last their souls are nothing but a bundle of unsatisfied desires and burning thirsts. We must find something better than this, or perish for ever.

*Summum bonum* :—1. In the history of ancient Greece we read of two sages—the Weeping and the Laughing Philosopher. The one saw nothing but the dark side ; the other looked always at the bright. We all know people belonging to both of these schools. It depends very largely on natural temperament to which of the two any person belongs ; for some are naturally melancholy, others sanguine. Partly, too, it may depend on fortune ; an early disappointment or the treachery of a supposed friend may poison a man's mind to all healthy influences ; whereas those into whose soul the iron has never entered are disposed to think lightly of the sufferings of others. 2. Somewhat analogous to this division of mankind is that in the text ; only, it goes far deeper. It speaks of a dissatisfaction with life which is consistent with much surface gaiety, and of a satisfaction which may be felt amid misfortune.

1. THE RESTLESS HUMAN HEART. You may have seen a picture called *The Pursuit of Pleasure*, in which pleasure is represented as an airy winged figure of dazzling beauty, floating just above the ground, turning her enchanting face towards those who are in pursuit of her ; but still retreating from them, as she draws them on. In the forefront of her pursuers are the young, with flushed faces and confident eyes, almost touching with their outstretched hands the fringes of her robe. Farther behind are those who have been longer in pursuit ; they are falling back in the race,

and there is the dread of disappointment in their eyes ; but their determination is all the stronger not to miss the prize. In the rear are those following in despair ; and some have stumbled and fallen, and are being trodden upon as the mad pursuit rushes by. Is it not too true ? Who can say, My desires are fulfilled, and I am satisfied ? If the blinds were drawn up from the windows of our hearts, what would be seen within ? The pain of desires which have found no fulfilment, the disappointment of hopes once cherished but abandoned now, the dread of coming change, which may strew the ground with the fair fabric of our prosperity. So difficult is it to catch the butterfly of happiness, and it is still more difficult to keep it. The men of thought and the men of action and the men of leisure arrive by different ways at the same result. They are seeking some great good which will satisfy the heart, but they have not found it ; and they are going about asking, Who will show us it ? And then life is so short. Now or never you must find the secret. Are we to live and die without once clasping our fingers over the prize, without once getting our hearts filled to the brim !

**II. THE HEART AT REST.** "Lord, lift upon us the light of Thy countenance." He is not asking, "Who will show us any good ?" for he knows the secret, he has found the supreme good, and he has nothing else to desire but this—that more and more God would lift on him and those for whom he speaks the light of His countenance. What does it mean ? The phrase is a very Oriental one. It is derived from the experience of an Eastern court. The light of the countenance is the expression which it wears when it is pleased. We know on what conditions God is now well pleased with the children of men. He is always well pleased with Christ, and with all whom He sees in Christ. This, therefore, in the language of Christian experience, is the solution of the problem—to have Christ, and ever more of Christ. How is this the solution ? How, in other words, does Christ give the heart rest ?

1. He does so by taking it off itself. When the kindness and love of God are revealed to the heart, when the self-sacrifice of Christ becomes the great theme of our joy and hope, a similar disposition is begotten in us : we love all those whom God loves and for whom Christ died, and we are ready to serve them, because Christ has said, Inasmuch as ye do it to the least of these, ye do it unto Me. You cannot help thinking well of mankind when you are trying to do them good, and you can never despise any soul if you believe Christ has esteemed it worthy of His life.
2. Not only does Christ draw the heart off itself, but He also gives it an object large enough to satisfy its desires. It possesses the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Who can estimate all that this implies ? How can any one with such a heritage go about moaning, "Who can show us any good ?" No, "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous" ; "the shout of a King is in their midst." The human heart is large and hungry ; but Christ can fill it, and He can keep it full.
3. This is a satisfaction which will never fail, but become deeper and more precious at the very stage when all other satisfactions are failing. It is not a wise view of religion which represents it as a substitute for all the good things by which life is enlarged and enriched—such as knowledge, love, health, work, and success. Rather is religion the sunny atmosphere in which all these things are to be enjoyed. (*J. Stalker, D.D.*) *Heavenly satisfaction best* :—"The old Rabbis say that when the famine came on in Egypt and the store-houses were opened, that Joseph threw the chaff of the grain upon the Nile, that it might float down the river and show those who lived below that there was abundance. So the blessings of this life are nothing more than the husks of God's bounty, compared with spiritual joys and heaven."

**Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.**—*The light of God's countenance* :—

**I. WHAT IS THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE ?**

1. That we are noticed by the Divine Being. He takes cognisance of your affairs.
2. That He is interested in us, as a father in the doings of his children.
3. That we are the objects and recipients of His favours. He favours our undertakings, circumstances, and conditions.
4. That He approves of our acts—accepts and fills us with peace.
5. That He helps us. God's favour is no empty pretence—His aid comes timely.
6. That He blesses us. His benediction conveys the good.

**II. THE RESULTS.** It puts "gladness into the heart." Why ? Because—

1. It is the countenance of a powerful, wise, omnipotent Being.
2. It is the exuberant gladness—overflowing joy—beyond any worldling's mirth—unending. How disquieted should those be from whom God's face is averted and for whom there is on His countenance a frown ! (*William Landels, D.D.*)

*The godly man's choice* :—1. A gracious heart doth more esteem the favour of God, and the light of His countenance, than any earthly thing whatsoever. What does the phrase "the light of Thy countenance" express ! It supposes that all our

iniquities and sins are pardoned and blotted out. So long as our guilt is upon us, and God seeth that, He turneth His face from us. There is implied, God's favour and love toward us. The original and cause of all God's gracious mercies in time. That God hath a peculiar respect unto His children. The efficacy and powerful effects thereof; for as the sun by its beams doth enlighten the whole earth, and give life and motion to everything, thus also doth God where He favours. This acting of God's face in reference to the godly, emptieth itself in two ways, in respect of outward and temporal mercies; and in respect of spiritual mercies. 2. The qualifications or characters of those who do value and desire God's favour above everything else. They are such as have a deep and true sense of the guilt of their sins. Such are often afflicted, persecuted, and of great exercises in this world. They who renounce their own righteousness. They who are spiritually-minded. They who live by faith, and are affected with things as revealed by the Scripture. They can esteem the favour of God, who have had experience of the sweetness and excellence of it. They who have the Spirit of God working in them. They who walk closely with God. (*Anthony Burgess.*) *The chief happiness of man is found in the enjoyment of God:*—All the various pleasures which this world affords are unsatisfying in their nature, and transitory in their duration. Happiness is the one object in pursuit of which all men are engaged. 1. True and satisfying enjoyment is not to be found in the pursuit or possession of the things of time. There is an obvious and acknowledged disparity between all the objects and pursuits of time, and the capacity of that being which was formed after the image of God. Various are the expedients which the wise men have recommended for the attainment of happiness. 2. The chief end of man, in so far as happiness is concerned, is the enjoyment of God Himself. Jehovah is the infinite source of all good. If a consciousness of His favour and love can be acquired, this will give the assurance of every blessing. The very conviction that God is, is a source of joy unspeakable. The contemplation of the relations in which the eternal God stands to us, is the source of His highest enjoyment. Above all, it is the knowledge of God as in Jesus, his reconciled Father, his covenant God, that gives him peace, and confidence, and joy. It is thus that, even now, Jehovah is enjoyed by all His believing people. (*Alexander Turner.*) *The source of the Christian's joy:*—I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE? The light of one's countenance denotes that peculiar aspect which bespeaks affection and favour. By the light of God's countenance we understand that clear and full manifestation of God to the soul, which assures it of an interest in His favour. There is a manifestation of God to the soul of the Christian, which is not enjoyed by other men, even with the Bible in their hands, nor always by the Christian himself. Though he does not pass beyond the limits of the written revelation, yet he sees in a peculiar manner what lies within its limits. He sees God, the great object of this revelation, in the light and radiance of reality. This manifestation of God is made to the Christian in the exercise of holy affections, and he is therefore assured of the Divine favour through the promises. In proportion to the strength and intenseness of holy affections, the misgivings of doubt, and fluctuations of faith, vanish. The assurance consequent on this manifestation of God to the soul is through the medium of the Divine promises. Whether God has promised—whether God is faithful, is not a matter of doubt to the Christian's mind. II. WHY THE CHRISTIAN DESIRES THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE ABOVE ALL EARTHLY GOOD. 1. He thus values and desires it, as it removes a sense of guilt from his mind. 2. He desires it for its own inherent consolation. This state of mind implies the serenity of unreserved confidence. Confidence in God, under a full manifestation of God. In this state there is a peculiar manifestation of God's love to the Christian. There is, also, between the soul and God, a delightful fellowship of affection and of interests. 3. He desires it, as it gives assurance of those future blessings which are the objects of hope. Thus we see why Christians so often mourn the hidings of God's face. The subject addresses those who have been taught to value and desire the light of God's countenance above all things. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *Men's true happiness consists in the favour of God:*—1. There is necessarily implanted in the very nature of man a desire of promoting his own happiness. This is a self-evident truth, and needs no proof. The only difference in men lies in determining wherein their true happiness consists, and by what methods it may best be attained. True religion is so far from discouraging men in their search after happiness that it forbids not the enjoyment of any one temporal blessing which God has created for the use of man, but only disorderly instances and unreasonable



excesses. 2. Wicked and corrupt men seek this happiness in the sinful enjoyments of the present life; and their choosing to do so is their great error and folly. The enjoyments of this world are ranked by St. John under three heads, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life": that is, pleasure, riches, and honour. Every one of these has a great mixture of evil attending it, has at best much emptiness and imperfection in it, and has much unsatisfactoriness and disappointment going along with it. They are not at best complete enough to satisfy the mind of man; and if they were, they cannot continue long enough to maintain and preserve its happiness. Whatever will make the mind of man happy, must be able to satisfy it both in its whole capacity and in its whole duration. Whatever is not sufficient to effect this, cannot be man's chief and final happiness. 3. Virtuous and good men place their chief happiness in the knowledge and favour of God, in the practice of virtue and true religion; and their acting according to this principle is the greatest and indeed the only true wisdom. (1) Wherein does this true happiness consist? Partly in their contemplating with delight, and meditating with pleasure, on the perfections of God the supreme good. Partly in the sense of God's present favour to them, arising from the consciousness of their agreeableness and conformity to His holy and Divine will. They know that God's favour and protection always accompanies righteous and just men. The favour God bears to virtuous and good men, they find belongs to themselves; and this affords them at all times and in all cases, a solid and rational satisfaction. Partly in the expectation of eternal rewards, with which hope they are supported here, and the actual possession of them, which they shall enjoy hereafter. (2) In what respect it excels the happiness of sensual and corrupt minds. I shall only observe that this happiness, which is the reward of virtue, exceeds all other pleasures infinitely in the two fore-mentioned qualifications of happiness, namely, perfection in degree, and continuance of duration (Psa. xvi. 11). (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *The great desire of the saints*:—However all men have a common nature, yet grace makes a vast difference among them. As it makes difference in their understandings, so in their wills. In this text the world is divided into two parties. In some things they agree; as in the sense of defects; and in their desire of supplies. There are some things in which they differ, as the object of their desires; the ways they take for accomplishing their desires; the success of their desires. Doctrine: It is a great desire of gracious souls to have the light of the Lord's countenance lifted up upon them. I. SPEAK TO THE CASE HERE SUPPOSED. The saint, the child of light, may sometimes sit in darkness. How far may this darkness proceed? It may go so far that they cannot see to read their evidences for heaven; they cannot see above them, nor look up to heaven. The very thing that was their light before may be as darkness to them. They may be unable to discern their best friend from their foe. They may lose sight of their guide, and of their way-marks. They may be weary of their very lives. II. THE DESIRE OF THE GRACIOUS SOUL. To have the light of God's countenance implies a state of reconciliation with God; the Lord's laying aside any special controversy with the soul; a communication of gracious influences, and an intimation of God's love to the soul. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The blessed man*:—Here we are taught how to carry and behave ourselves in times of danger. I. A DISPOSITION IN ALL MEN TO SEEK AFTER SOMETHING THAT MAY MAKE THEM HAPPY. It is true, indeed, that naturally men do not distinctly know wherein their happiness lies; but, as Aquinas observes, there is a general knowledge of happiness, and there is a distinct and right understanding of it. Now though all men have not this distinct knowledge of our happiness, yet all men have a special knowledge of it, and they know that it is good for them to be happy; surely, therefore, there is a disposition in all the children of men to seek after something that may make them happy. II. MEN ARE GENERALLY MISTAKEN IN THE MATTER OF THEIR HAPPINESS. Is not he mistaken herein that doth bless himself in the way of his sin; or in the enjoyment of the creature? Some place their happiness in pleasure, or riches, or honour, or power, or health, strength, and beauty of body, or knowledge, wit, and learning, or in moral civil life. But what creature excellency is there that can give happiness to the sons of men? Certainly none. How comes it to pass that men are thus mistaken? Sometimes the mistake arises from ignorance of the right and true notion of happiness; or from the misapplication of the true notion of happiness; or because men measure their happiness by their present want; or because they do not hearken to and consider what is spoken to them about true happiness. III. THERE IS A GENERATION OF MEN WHO HAVE FOUND THIS BLESSEDNESS. They are blessed because their sins are

forgiven: when the Lord teaches them the mysteries of the kingdom. They are blessed who wait at the posts of wisdom, and are made wise thereby; they who are meek; they who know and do the work of their place and office; they who wait for the coming of Christ; they who die in the Lord. IV. WHEREIN DOETH THIS TRUE HAPPINESS CONSIST? In the shine of God's face. The face of God is His favour. If God hath ever blessed you in truth, then hath His face shined upon you. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *True happiness found in God's favour only:*—In this text two different and opposite characters are introduced. The true Christian differs widely from all others, with respect to the ultimate object of his desires and pursuits. His treasure is in heaven, and there his heart is also. He draws all his hope and happiness from the favour of God, and the enjoyment of His love. I. THE DISPOSITION OF UNREGENERATE MEN, as represented in this text. "Who will make us to see good?" To see good is an expression which denotes the enjoyment of it. This desire, and the manner in which it is expressed, imply—1. A departure from the original constitution of human nature. Man was a creature framed to derive all his happiness from intercourse with his Maker. While he continued in a state of rectitude, he enjoyed consummate blessedness. Man, in innocence, found in the Divine favour and fellowship a source of happiness pure and inexhaustible. What a melancholy change sin produced. Communion with God was wholly interrupted. Man came to ask for "any good," any present, sensible, worldly good. 2. An idolatrous attachment to the world. Fallen man having cast off God, exalts the world into His throne. All natural men set their hearts on some created good, from which they expect their best happiness. Whatever draws the heart away from God, and occupies His room in the affections, is a sin of the deepest dye, it is the vilest idolatry. 3. A disposition strictly to examine all the sources of worldly bliss. Every object that promises entertainment is greedily embraced. 4. The question is expressive of the dissatisfaction attendant on all earthly pursuits. Many are the expedients which are devised by the lovers of this world to obtain the "good" which they do ardently pant after, but they all fail of success. The world, with all its splendid ornaments, is a mere picture of felicity, and ever disappoints and deceives its votaries. True peace and rest they never find. 5. A disposition to renew the pursuit after worldly happiness, notwithstanding repeated disappointments. II. CONTRAST THE DISPOSITION OF THESE WITH THAT OF RENEWED AND SANCTIFIED SOULS. The text gives the breathings of their hearts. The terms used are figurative, but highly significant. God is a Spirit, and therefore hath no bodily members. He is pleased to address men in their own language. Men express favour or displeasure by the different appearances of countenance which they assume. The "light of God's countenance" denotes a sense of His love as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. This ardent desire to enjoy the smiles of God's benign countenance includes in it—1. Some knowledge and experience of the condescension and grace of God in accepting sinners through Christ Jesus. God has manifested His love in providing a Saviour for us exactly suited to our wants. 2. This prayer is expressive of supreme delight in communion with God. Nothing is more characteristic of a Christian than this. He pants after the Divine fellowship, as the principle of all his enjoyment, the very happiness of his being. 3. Cordially to join in this prayer of the Psalmist, supposes the high value and diligent use of every means of Divine institution where God has promised to meet with His people. 4. It also implies a longing desire for the full enjoyment of God in heaven. Conclusion: (1) Let every one here inquire what is the temper of his mind and the tendency of his heart. (2) See the extreme folly of those who yield themselves to this world's influence for the attainment of happiness. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The hindrances to our living in the light of God's countenance:*—What David here speaks of was not a glowing and happy state of feeling exercised upon spiritual subjects, but something more substantial and real. Feelings are ever varying in their clearness and amount. It was not of so uncertain a thing as the ebb and flow of this changing tide of emotion. That of which he spoke was the practical carrying out into the events of daily life of that great truth which lies near to the foundation of all religion—that it is the very condition of our individual and eternal being and consciousness that we should be really nearer at all times to the great God than we can be to any other being. 1. The first hindrance Christians find is, allowing themselves in a formal and indeavour character of service. If we rest in the acts of worship or devotion, we lose that which is their chief benefit, communion with God. The same loss is incurred by making religion to consist in "feelings" of devotion. 2. Christian men form too low a notion of the holiness which God has put within

their reach. They are too apt to think of holiness as mainly valuable because it is an evidence of faith. Hence, when they are satisfied about their faith, they are in danger of becoming somewhat languid in seeking after holiness. 3. Another hindrance is a multitude of worldly cares. There is such a natural agreement between our heart and earthly things, that they are apt to lay hold again and again of those affections which we perhaps had hoped were truly weaned from them, and set upon things above. Two chief means by which the power of the world may be resisted are, first, on the appearance of the danger, honestly examine whether you are not multiplying cares which you are not really called upon to meet, and which therefore are more than you can bear. And, secondly, do all this worldly business as unto the Lord; endeavour to bring the presence of God into it all. 4. The want of earnestness is a hindrance. This is seen in many ways—in the evident coldness of prayer; in frequent absence from some among the means of grace; or in a careless walk, and remissness in resistance of temptation; and in their being ready to acquiesce in such a state as that in which they must continue. The want of earnestness may spring from different causes. It may be the effect of a lurking infidelity. Another cause of this inaction is a secret hope that some time or other you will find it easier to turn to God, to serve Him heartily. Sometimes it pleases God to withhold spiritual comforts, and the sense of His gracious presence from the soul, even when we cannot find any cause of carelessness in the believer. This is, when it happens, a fearful part of the believer's discipline. Doubtless it is sent to work some blessed end. (*Bishop Wilberforce.*) *A satisfying view of Christ:*—An earnest Christian woman lay upon her deathbed in a Boston hospital. She had devoted herself to an unselfish life, and contracted the disease that caused her death, in spending her life for others. The night she died she said to her attendants, "Please raise the curtain." There, on a great church opposite the hospital, flooded by moonlight, stood Thorwaldsen's statue of the Master. Long and silently she gazed upon it. "Don't drop the curtain," she pleaded. "I want to look at Christ." Our doubts, our sins, our troubles, our perplexities, are all curtains that fall between us and the true meaning of a simple Christian life. Raise them and look at Him. *Happiness in God's favour:*—Four things briefly put about the happiness that comes of God's smile. 1. It goes to heighten other joys where they are possessed. There are such joys, sources of satisfaction for the intellect, for the social heart, for every want of man except that of the soul. Let this deepest need of man be met, and all other things will yield more good. 2. Further, true happiness remains when other sources of joy have passed away. Failures, reverses, losses, are always saddening; but have we not known men in whose heart happiness has held its seat even amidst the wreck of their fortunes? Yet again, the joy of God dwells within the soul of many a man who never had many other sources of comfort. God's poor are gladdened by the light of His countenance. 3. Lastly, this happiness will be enjoyed in proportion as we are seeking it. The Christian living beneath the sunlight is the happy Christian. The Christian who often lives without seeking it, lacks the joy. So, then, here is the secret of a happy life—it is with God. It is living in friendship and fellowship with God; it lies in the consciousness of His favour and love. The one spot on earth where happiness is to be found is the heart of a good man. (*J. B. French.*)

Ver. 7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*—*Thanksgiving for harvest:*—1. The joy in harvest is based on the successful result of labour. Labour is God's law, and obedience to it secures a result corresponding to the means used, and that result is a real blessing in the ratio in which God is recognised and honoured, by obeying Him in the law which He has enjoined. Spiritual blessings are only attained through spiritual means. How few men recognise, in God's ministration of natural plenty, a silent sermon on the passage, "He giveth all things richly to enjoy." A Christian looks upon a plentiful harvest, not simply as a pledge of cheaper bread, but as a mark of God's approval of the industry which wrought for this end. All industrious nations are thriving, though all are not God-fearing nations. 2. Joy in harvest commemorates the termination of solicitude, in reference to a favourable season for ripening and gathering in the crops. Scripture alludes to many of the trials and disappointments of the husbandman. There is a proverbial impatience and murmuring among tillers of the soil. A like impatience is not rare among some Christians. The harvest, as an annual ripening and realising of profit, should suggest annual inquiry into our own scale of personal maturity in the things of



God. Has the past year yielded a good spiritual return for mental toil, and thought, and prayer, and the means of grace? 3. The joy of harvest reasonably includes the prospect of an adequate supply for our own and others' necessities. There is danger, as well as misery, in a public deficiency of the necessities of life. The law and the loaf flourish best together. 4. The joy of an abundant harvest should stimulate us to renewed and enhanced confidence in God. If He thus blesses the labour of the field, doubt not He will bless every believer in his personal calling. (*Joseph B. Owen, M.A.*) *Plus gladness*:—Christianity is a religion of gladness. You cannot have one Divine idea in you without being glad. You cannot have any Divine ideas so long as you are unpardoned. It is the distinction of the gospel to proclaim possible forgiveness, and when forgiveness has taken effect then joy begins; on every bough of every tree there is a singing bird. But until we are pardoned, and pardoned at the Cross, we cannot admit God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost into our hearts to abide with us and sup with us and manifest themselves to us, and therefore we cannot have this simple, pure, celestial, inexhaustible joy. Christianity gives joy unspeakable, joy unutterable. Joy has no words; joy takes up all our little words, and uses them, and then says, I want more, more, another language, and because it has no more articulation it bursts forth into songs without words, it mingles with the melody of the spheres. To that high festival we are called! But is not the religion of Christ a religion of melancholy? No. It has in it the deepest melancholy ever known, but one thing is so often forgotten by Christian evangelists: Christ died only once. They will not think of that—only once. He did die—died as never man died; He was despised and rejected of men, He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair; but He died only once. He lives for evermore. Why do we not at our Eastertides remember this!—the death for a moment, the life for ever! So we come up out of darkness to sing of light; we leave the desert, one little mile long, and enter upon the boundless paradise of God. Do not condemn yourselves because you have not a continual consciousness of this joy. Much of that want of consciousness may be due to physical infirmity; we are fearfully and wonderfully made; the body may be having the upper hand for a time. Then some men's self lies such a long way within themselves they have to shed off coat after coat, to slough off bad skin after bad skin a thousand in number, before they get at their real Ego, their real I, their real and divinest self. Some of us have a hard fight. Some of you think you are going to lose. Hear me: you are not. "Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last." For the moment he is down, but God is in him, and he will spring from the dust, and at the last even the poor tribe called Gad shall sing of victory, sit down with conquerors! (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The duty, method, and importance of being happy*:—There are wants of the soul which no earthly good can satisfy. The happiness to meet these wants consists in a calm, cheerful, submissive, contented frame of mind. I. This happiness is not only a privilege, it is a SACRED AND MOST IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN DUTY. 1. By far the greater part of the unhappiness which people complain of, is of their own procuring, and is to be set down as resulting, not from any unavoidable necessity, either in nature or circumstances, but from a perverted free agency, from violating some of the laws of our being, from voluntary indiscretions, errors, and sins. Remove the sources of unhappiness, and little comparatively would remain to embitter the cup of life, or make us unhappy. If the unhappiness is caused by ourselves, then it is our "duty" to cease from so profitless, so bad a work. 2. It is our duty to be happy, because it is our duty to be right—right in our feelings, principles, habits, and aims; and just so far as we are so, we must, and we shall be happy. The happiness of which I speak is in the state of the mind, and independent, in great measure, of outward circumstances. 3. God wishes us to be happy. This cannot be doubted by any who believe that God is a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness. True, in our present state, there are many things within and without, which tend to perplex and try us, and, in point of fact, do often greatly interrupt and disturb our happiness. These, we have seen, are partly our own procuring. So far as they come in the course of Divine Providence, they are means designed of our Father in heaven to promote our present and future happiness. They are among the "all things that work together for good." 4. Look at the constitution of man as made in the image of God, and formed to share, in his measure, in the happiness of God. A law pervades your whole mental constitution, making it certain that the right normal exercise of your powers and affections can result only in making you happy.

5. From the abundant means God has provided to render you happy. He who made you, and made you to be happy, has provided means adapted to gratify all your desires and aspirations, so far as they are right and proper. The means God has provided for our happiness do not stop in the things of earth and time. II. THE METHOD OR WAY TO BE HAPPY. 1. We must leave off making ourselves unhappy. Turn out all those consumers of happiness which are so apt to find a home in the bosom. Their name is legion, and by many they are indulged and nursed to the overthrow of all internal peace and comfort. 2. Cultivate kind and benevolent affections—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, truth. These virtues, in habitual exercise, as they are required to be, cannot fail to diffuse sunshine and pleasantness over the whole mind and life. 3. Note the Saviour's prescription for being happy, as contained in the opening of His Sermon on the Mount. "Blessed are they," &c. What is the principle, the source, of the blessedness expressed in these different terms? Plainly it is internal; it springs from the affections. III. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING HAPPY. It is not necessary to dwell on this. It is not, however, common for happiness to be inculcated as a duty. It is usually regarded as a matter which every one must be left to dispose of as he chooses, without incurring any moral responsibility. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *Religion no enemy to joy*:—Joy and pleasure are things so truly desired by all mankind, that religion suffers by being thought an enemy to them. Religion restrains us from nothing, but what our own reason and interest should restrain us from. In all harmless and innocent satisfactions, that neither intrench upon the honour of God, nor the rights of others, nor our own peace and quiet, we have leave to pick and choose. I. THE NATURE OF THIS INWARD JOY AND PLEASURE. Not a natural gaiety and cheerfulness of humour, or a few light and transient fits of mirth, nor yet any strong and confident presumptions of God's love and favour, or any rapturous transports, and sensible ravishments of joy. That which I intend is, a solid and rational satisfaction of mind, in the goodness and soundness of a man's estate towards God, and flows usually from these two things—from a sincere and regular discharge of our duty, which brings its own comfort and tranquillity along with it. And from a cheerful reflection upon a man's innocency, and the integrity of his actions, when a man dares look back upon what he has done, and knows that he has the testimony and approbation of heaven on his side, bearing witness to the vote and suffrage of his own conscience. II. WHAT INFLUENCE RELIGION HAS UPON THE JOY AND PLEASURE OF A MAN'S MIND. 1. Religion restores a man to the grace and favour of God, and assures him that his sins are pardoned, and his peace made with heaven. 2. A course of virtue and religion subdues our inordinate appetites and vicious inclinations, which are the great fountains of inquietude and trouble. Religion circulates through all our powers, disposes every faculty to act in its due place and order, and determines every affection to its peculiar object. 3. A pious and religious life secures to a man the peculiar care and protection of the Divine Providence, than which there cannot be a stronger support and comfort to the mind of a wise and good man. 4. Religion refreshes the mind of a good man with a joyful assurance of the glory and blessedness of the other world. III. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION, ABOVE ALL THE DELIGHTS AND PLEASURES OF THIS WORLD. "More than when the corn and the wine increases." 1. The delights of this world are gross and corporeal, and affect only the external senses, and are the pleasures of the brute, rather than of the man. 2. The pleasures of religion are more solid and satisfying than anything this world can afford. They fill our appetites, and fix our desires, and settle the soul upon the right basis and temper. 3. Religious pleasures are more large and comprehensive, they take in a vaster compass, the delights both of this and of the other world. 4. The pleasures of religion have infinitely the advantage of all others in point of duration and continuance. They abide with us when other comforts fly, or are rifled away from us. The sum is this—"the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever." (*William Cave, D.D.*) *The saint's gladness*:—The chief distinction between a child of God and a man of the world lies in the prevailing tendency of their desires. 1. The Psalmist's description of opposite characters. See the description of worldly men, in ver. 6. It is obvious—(1) That this question betrays a great degree of inward dissatisfaction and perplexity. They say "any good," anything to fill up the craving vacuity of our minds. At the time of the question they cannot find anything in their lot that deserves the name of good. (2) The only good they inquire for is some present sensible enjoyment, which may be pointed out to the eye of sense. They look not "at the

things which are unseen and eternal." (3) They make no discrimination of the objects which they seek after. (4) They do not turn their thoughts at all to God. They seek counsel from others, but none from Him. Turn to consider the temper of a child of God. He too seeks "good"; but (i) It is not "any" good that will satisfy him. He cannot feed upon husks. He seeks the "chief good." (ii) He knows where that good is to be found. The favour of God, and the sense of His loving-kindness, are the only sources of true happiness. The worldly mind is in a state of perpetual fluctuation. (iii) The child of God goes directly to God Himself, and begs the blessing from Him. (iv) The Psalmist, in the name of the godly, uses this prayer in direct opposition to the carnal language of worldly men. Intimating to us, that a child of God can relish no sweetness in any inferior good, till he be assured of the Divine favour. 2. The propositions which arise from this comparison. (1) Worldly men have little cause to rejoice in the temporal advantages which they possess. These outward things may consist with the present misery of the person who possesses them. Indeed, these things are frequently the means of making men miserable, and of fixing them in that deplorable state. These things may end in misery, and leave the owner in everlasting woe. (2) Consider those solid grounds of joy which belong to the people of God. He is possessed of the joy which results from comparing his present and happy condition with the misery in which he was once involved. Source of joy to a child of God, also consists in the actual honours and privileges conferred upon him. He is advanced to the dearest and most intimate relation to God, adopted into His family, and invested with all the rights of a son. The joy of a saint also proceeds from the contemplation of those future blessings which are yet only the objects of hope. These sources of joy are of such a nature as that no outward distress or calamity can take them away. Improvement of this subject. 1. Inquire which of the characters described by the Psalmist belongs to us. 2. I exhort those of you who are yet carnally-minded, to think seriously of your condition. 3. Let those who have been taught to value the light of God's countenance above all things, learn to be humble and thankful. (*R. Walker.*) *Christians should reflect on their felicity*:—"Living in Rome, a famous antiquarian and artist (*Winkelmann*) tells how he gave himself half an hour every day to meditate on his Italian happiness. Thousands have lived in Rome with the same pure sky smiling over them, and the same articulate antiquity on every side accosting them, and never been aware of their felicity." And is it not thus with the average Christian life? For the want of reflection and a calm survey of our standing and inheritance in Jesus Christ, our joy and gladness are intermittent instead of perennial and abiding. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) *Happy without a fortune*:—"Recovering from an illness, Mr. Wilberforce remarked, "I can scarcely understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show them a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one." *A happy life*:—"Now, as they were going along and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father's sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of a very fresh and well-favoured countenance, and as he sat by himself, he sang—

"He that is down needs fear no fall;

He that is low no pride;

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,

Little be it or much;

And, Lord, contentment still I crave,

Because Thou savest such.

Fulness to such a burden is,

That go on pilgrimage:

Here little, and hereafter bliss,

Is best from age to age."

Then said their guide, "Do you hear him?" "I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called heart's ease in his bosom, than he that is clad in silk and velvet." (*John Bunyan.*)

Ver. 8. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. —*Signs of a quiet spirit*:—In the text are two subjects. David's



privilege or happiness itself. The ground or foundation of this his happiness. In the letter and proposition of it, we have the comfortableness and advantage of natural rest. In the scope and drift of it, we have the comfortableness and advantage of God's favour. The security and fearlessness of a godly person, who is in the love and favour of God, and hath this evidenced and made good to his soul. He is one that is free from all inordinate disturbance, and disquietness of spirit. Those who are reconciled to God, and in His love, have privileges beyond others, so as "in patience to possess their souls," in the midst of the greatest outward trouble. This is grounded upon that persuasion which they have of God Himself, and of His affections towards them. It is implied, that none can well thus compose themselves, but those which are thus affected. None can lie down in peace and sleep securely, but those who have made their peace with God, and are in favour with Him. A guilty conscience can never lie down in quiet. Great estates in the world are, for the most part, occasions of great distraction and disquietness of spirit, and such as are subject to break men of their natural rest. Why could David sleep with his estate, rather than his enemies with theirs? Because his was sanctified and sweetened to him by the love of God. Note the ground of the godly man's composure. "Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." The blessing itself—a safe and secure habitation. As we desire to dwell safely, let us be careful to dwell holily: and that includes piety and religion; justice, honesty, and righteousness; peace, friendship, love and quietness of spirit; charity and giving to the poor. This blessing flows from God Himself. It is not a business of mere casualty, there's a providence in it. Not a business of mere endeavour, it comes by the blessing of God. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *How to close the day with God:*—This may be understood, either figuratively, of the repose of the soul, in the assurance of God's grace, or literally, of the repose of the body, under the protection of His providence. The Psalmist having given the preference to God's favour above any good, having chosen that, and portioned himself in that, here expresses his great complacency in the choice he had made. Those who have the assurances of God's favour toward them, may enjoy, and should labour after, a holy serenity and security of mind. It is the privilege of good people that they may be thus easy and satisfied; and it is their duty to use the means appointed for the obtaining it. The Psalmist, after an anxious day, now retires to his chamber with the words, "I will lay me down in peace, and sleep." Here we have David's pious thoughts when he was going to bed. Observe his confidence in God, his composure in himself. Doctrine: As we must begin the day with God, and wait upon Him all the day, so we must endeavour to close it with Him. Let us retire to lay us down. Some sit up to do mischief to their neighbours; others sit up in pursuit of the world and the wealth of it; others sit up in the indulgence of their pleasures. But let us lay down with thankfulness to God, and with thoughts of dying; with penitent reflections upon the sins of the day, and with humble supplications for the mercies of the night. We should be convinced of it that we are still contracting guilt. We should examine our consciences, that we may find out our particular transgressions of the day past. We should renew our repentance, for whatever we find has been amiss in us. We should make a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls, for the remission of our sins, and the gracious acceptance of our repentance. We should apply ourselves to the throne of grace for peace and pardon. Let us also lie down with humble supplication for the mercies of the night. We must pray, that our outward man may be under the care of God's holy angels, who are the ministers of His providence. We must pray, that our inward man may be under the influences of His Holy Spirit, who is the author and fountain of His grace. And when we lay down, our care and endeavour must be to lay us down in peace. Let us lie down in peace with God; for without this there can be no peace at all. Let us lie down in peace with all men: we are concerned to go to sleep, as well as to die, in charity. Let us lie down at peace with ourselves. But when may we lie down in peace at night? If we have, by the grace of God, in some measure done the work of the day, and filled it up with duty. If we have by faith, and patience, and submission to the Divine will, reconciled ourselves to all the events of the day so as to be uneasy at nothing that God has done. If we have renewed our repentance for sin. If we have put ourselves under the Divine protection. If we have cast all our cares for the day following upon God. Having laid ourselves down in peace, we must compose ourselves to sleep. It is by the power of God's providence that we are kept safe in the night. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Sleep:*—Sleep is the image of death. Jesus Christ abolished the terrors of the first

death, the death of the body. In the text is not a prayer of David, but a determination on his part. To a certain extent, peaceful sleep depends upon ourselves. A peaceful state of mind has a great deal to do with the power of enjoying God's gift of sleep. And, similarly, a peaceful death depends on ourselves. There is such a thing as the quietness of a stupefied conscience. How may we, as far as conscience is concerned, carry out the resolution that we will lie down in peace? 1. By doing all that in us lies to preserve a peaceful conscience during the day. Begin the day with earnest prayer. Our morning prayers may show us what we wish to be, but the temptations of the day show us what we are. Our consciences cannot but be injured, if we are guilty of faults and errors during the day, and take no account of them at the close of the day. Self-examination gives an earnestness and a reality to the prayer for pardon. If it be true that the last sleep of all makes the sleep of each night more solemn, it is also true that each night's sleep makes the last sleep of all less strange. What is each day but a picture of the whole life, and each night but a picture of death? Then we must do all that in us lies to preserve a peaceful conscience during the years of life. (*W. H. Ranken, M.A.*)

*The Christian good-night*:—This is one of the many verses in the Bible, especially in the Psalms, which must come home to every heart of man, if read with any degree of simple faith. It sets full before us the most comfortable and refreshing picture of a devout, sober, honest person, after his day's work is ended, his passions kept in order, his sins repented of, and his prayers seriously said, laying himself down to his night's rest, in the full consciousness that he is neither alone nor unguarded; that as there has been a merciful Eye watching over him, a mighty Hand stretched out to guard him, through the dangers and temptations of the day, so it will be with him in the night also. This entire rest and tranquillity of God's faithful servants, when they lay them down on their bed at night, is beautifully expressed in the text, "I will lay me down 'all together'"; all my powers of mind and body agreeing, as it were, one with another; not torn by violent passions, by desire on the one hand, and remorse on the other. How catholic, how universal is the thought expressed by the Psalmist. There is no one condition of life that it suits better than another. The need of taking rest is a universal law of God's providence over men here in this lower world. As death, so sleep may be truly called a great leveller. As sleep is the image of death, and as the slumber of every night is a kind of sacramental token of that last long sleep, these words may be used for a dying Christian also. Only a Christian has a warrant from Holy Scripture to regard death as no more than a quiet sleep. The Father, acknowledging them as His children, receives them at their death into the everlasting arms. As all the blessings which we have or hope for depend on the Passion of our Lord and Saviour, so this blessing of taking our rest, whether in our bed or in the grave, seems to bear an especial relation to the mystery of the burial of Jesus Christ. Our warrant for our hope is that the Son of God died for us, bought us to be His own in such sort, that we should be really joined to Him, mystically made members of His body. As members, inseparable members, of the Man Christ Jesus, we hope to have our bodies buried with Him; and for our souls, our true selves, we hope that when they pass away from our bodies they may be with Him that day in Paradise. Except we have this hope in us, we cannot apply to ourselves the comfortable words of this Psalm. How is it that in sleep, and still more in death, Christian men may humbly depend on a peculiar presence of our Lord Jesus Christ to guard them? 1. Because He is King, who has promised, "He that keepeth thee will not sleep." 2. In this act of lying down comes in the remembrance and the power of our Lord's sacrifice. That deep sleep of His, on the Cross and in the grave, has sanctified and blessed the sleep of all penitent Christians for all time to come, whether in their beds or in the bosom of the earth. Sin and its punishment, disease and misery, is the great disturber of sleep. Then to have a reasonable hope, grounded on a good conscience, that blemished as you are with many infirmities, you have not forfeited the blessing of Christ's death; this is the secret of good nights, and a comfortable death-time. Again, we are taught in Holy Scripture to regard the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ as one very especial safeguard for the sleeping, until they wake, and for the dead, until they rise again. (*Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

*A good night watchman*:—I have noticed in the books of travellers, this observation, "We found it exceedingly difficult to obtain a tent-keeper who could keep awake at night." One gentleman speaks of discovering a thief in his tent, and when he went outside to call the watchman he found that the man had gone so soundly to sleep that he could only

be aroused by one or two gentle kicks. When a man has been travelling with you all day, it is unreasonable to expect him to keep awake through the night to take care of you. Hence the beauty of the words, "Behold He that keepeth Israel," &c. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

## PSALM V.

**VERS. 1-12. Give ear to my words, O Lord.**—*The inward and outward sides of the Divine life*:—The Psalm falls into two main parts—vers. 1-7, and vers. 8-12. The inward comes first; for communion with God in the secret place of the Most High must precede all walking in His way, and all blessed experience of His protection, with the joy that springs from it. The Psalm is a prayerful meditation on the inexhaustible theme of the contrasted blessedness of the righteous, and misery of the sinner, as shown in the two great halves of life: the inward of communion, and the outward of action. A Psalmist who has grasped the idea that the true sacrifice is prayer, is not likely to have missed the cognate thought that the "house of the Lord," of which he will presently speak, is something other than any material shrine. But to offer sacrifice is not all which he rejoices to resolve. He will "keep watch"; that can only mean that he will be on the outlook for the answer to his prayer, or, if we may retain the allusion to sacrifice, for the downward flash of the Divine fire, which tells his prayer's acceptance. The confidence and resolve ground themselves on God's holiness, through which the necessary condition of approach to Him comes to be purity. God's holiness shuts out the impure. The Psalmist's vocabulary is full of synonyms for sin, which witness to the profound consciousness of it that law and ritual had evoked in devout hearts. In ver. 7 the Psalmist comes back to the personal reference, contrasting his own access to God with the separation of evil-doers from His presence. But he does not assert that he has the right of entrance because he is pure. The second part may be taken as his prayer when in the temple, whether that be the outward sanctuary or no. The whole of the devout man's desires for himself are summed up in the prayer for guidance. He breaks into prayer which is also prophecy. We come into the sunshine again at the close of the Psalm, and hear the contrasted prayer, which thrills with gladness and hope. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) *Prayer to God*:—This Psalm hath two parts—1. The prophet prayeth the Lord to hear his prayer; which thing the wicked cannot, or may not hope for. 2. He beseecheth the Lord to direct him, that the enemies might take no advantage of him; whose nature he describeth, praying God to overthrow them; comforting, on the other side, the godly with excellent promises. Ver. 1 teacheth that God's children many times use words in their prayers, many times not. So did Moses, and Anna the mother of Samuel. God's children should strive to earnestness in prayer, and should pray unto none but to Him alone. Ver. 3 teacheth that we should break our sleep in the morning, to the end we might pray unto the Lord. Seeing God cannot away with wickedness, His children should abhor it likewise. In ver. 6 are comprehended judgments against the ungodly, namely, against liars, cruel persons, and deceitful men. We may not appear before God in the trust of our own merits, which indeed we have not, but of His mercies only. Also that with reverence we should repair to the places of God's service, and reverently also there behave ourselves. Unless God guide us, we shall go out of the way; the strength of our corrupted nature carrying us headlong thereto. Also we should pray for a holy life, and to this end, that the mouths of our enemies may be stopped from evil speech. Ver. 9 is a lively description of the qualities of the ungodly: they are inconstant, they imagine mischief, they are given to cruelty and to flattery. It is lawful to pray against the enemies of the Church, that their counsels and desires may be scattered. The faithful may rejoice at the overthrow of God's enemies. From ver. 12 we learn in what assuredness they are, whom the Lord defendeth; those who repose themselves upon the rock of His almighty protection cannot miscarry. (Thomas Wilcocks.) *David's state of mind in relation to God and society*:—I. IN RELATION TO GOD. Here are revealed—1. His beliefs of God. In His omniscience the Eternal knows our "meditation." In God's moral holiness, God's being is the foundation, God's will the standard, and God's influence the fountain, of all moral excellence in the universe. In the administrative rectitude of



God. The holy God must punish unrepenting sinners, wherever they are found. There is administrative justice in the universe which will righteously balance the affairs of humanity one day. 2. His feelings towards God. The feeling of personal interest. "My King." He felt that the Guardian of the universe was in a high sense his; his Guardian, his Father, and his Friend. A feeling of earnest supplication. And the feeling of practical expectancy. David "looked up" expecting. 3. His purpose in relation to God. He purposed early prayer; orderly prayer; there is a becoming order in worship. II. IN RELATION TO SOCIETY. 1. He regards all who are his enemies as enemies to God. See in David's conduct the common mistake of bigots, and the persecuting spirit of bigots. 2. He regards all who were God's friends as his own. God's friends should be our friends, His people our people. (*Homilist.*) *The prayerful and unprayerful*:—I. THE ADDRESS AND MANNER OF PRAYER (1-3). Uttered words tell not all the heart meditates. These meditations are the groanings which cannot be uttered, but which the Spirit understands (Rom. viii. 26, 27). As soon as we awake at early dawn let us speak to God, "direct," set in order, our prayer. We are not to pray without method; and having prayed, look out for the answer (Hab. ii. 1). We miss many answers, because we get tired of waiting on the quays for the returning ships. II. CONTRASTED CHARACTERS (4-7). There are here severe expressions for the ungodly. They may not even "sojourn" with God, as a wayfaring man (2 John 10). They speak leasing, an old English word for lying. Not in the spirit of boasting, but of humble gratitude does David turn to himself (1 Cor. xv. 10). "Thy holy temple" (Dan. vi. 10; 1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 3). III. THE PRAYER (8-12). We may appeal to God's righteousness to vindicate His righteous ones. Because He is what He is, we may count on Him (2 Chron. xvi. 9). How terrible is the description of the ungodly (9), yet it is almost entirely concerned with the sins of the tongue. Wicked men are like sepulchres, fair without, corruption within, and exhaling pestilential vapours. Ver. 11. "Trust," and with it goes joy and love (Deut. xxxiii. 23). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The oratory gate*:—This Psalm is a prayer. And while the subject-matter is of great interest, the Psalm is peculiar in setting forth the characteristics of prayer in general. 1. A suggestion of the VARIETY OF PRAYER (vers. 1, 2). Prayer is a provision for a universal need, and must therefore be capable of a large variety of adaptations. If a man is to pray without ceasing, he must pray under an endless variety of circumstances. That is prayer which is denoted by the word "meditation"; that which lies in the heart as unexpressed desire or aspiration; which indicates a state or habit of mind quite as much as an act. "Meditation," says Gurnall, "is prayer in bullion; prayer in the ore—soon melted and run into holy desires." The soul's unexpressed aspiration is often more truly prayer than the well-rounded formula. Distinguish between the spirit and the habit of prayer. The spirit can be the result only of the life of God in the soul; the habit of prayer may be the result of education merely. Another variety of prayer is suggested by the word "cry"—the passionate outburst of a soul in distress, or dejection, or danger; throwing out a prayer like a strongly-shot dart, which gives to such prayer the name of "ejaculatory." "These darts may be shot to heaven without using the tongue's bow." Such prayer as this links itself closely with meditation. Ver. 2 directs thought to THE APPROPRIATING POWER OF PRAYER. God is addressed as "my King," "my God." Our Lord's model of prayer strikes at all unselfishness in our petitions. But it does not exclude the personal element. Ver. 3 points out THE STATEDNESS AND DECENCY OF PRAYER. It is well that prayer should be spontaneous; but also well that it should be properly regulated. A rich soil is a good thing; but its richness is no reason why its fruits and grasses should be allowed to grow up in confusion. The suggestion of decency in the act of prayer is furnished by the word "direct." The original word is used of arranging the wood and the sacrifice upon the altar day by day. Read, "I will pray, setting forth my supplication in order." In this there is nothing to repress spontaneity or to fetter liberty. It merely teaches that prayer should be decorous and well pondered and marked by an intelligent purpose. We should do well to cover less ground in our prayers, and to ponder their details more carefully. Ver. 3 gives another characteristic of prayer—EXPECTANCY. "I will watch, or look up." He who has thoughtfully and reverently set forth his prayer before God, should expect the answer. We are to watch unto prayer—with reference to prayer. Some one has pithily said that the man who does not look after the prayers he has put up, is like the ostrich, which lays her eggs and looks not for her young. Ver. 7 gives another characteristic—CONFIDENCE. The

Psalmist speaks as one who has a right to come into God's house. It is his house because it is God's. This confidence by no means excludes humble reverence. It is of free grace, of undeserved compassion, of abounding love, that I am permitted to come. And such an approach to God must involve the last element of prayer suggested by the Psalm—JOY. On earth, the intercourse of love is often marred by danger; but he who talks with God in His own house, always communes in safety. Thus this Psalm is a great lesson on prayer. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The poverty of speech in prayer*:—"The power of language has been gradually enlarging for a great length of time, and I venture to say that the English language at the present time can express more, and is more subtle, flexible, and at the same time vigorous, than any of which we possess a record." So writes Richard Jefferies in one of his latest essays. But, notwithstanding all this, he recognises that we have still thoughts and feelings beyond expression. "How many have said of the sea," he exclaims, "it makes me feel something I cannot say." And how much more does this feeling possess us as we commune with Him who made the sea. Words fail to express the thoughts, and thoughts fail to fathom the truth. Consider my meditation.—*The unspoken part of prayer*:—"And not only must his tongue be listened to, his thought must be interpreted as well. He implores, "Understand my meditation." This is the old Prayer-Book rendering, and seems to come nearest the Hebrew (*bin*). A parallel passage is, "Thou understandest my thought afar off; for there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." The petition "Understand my meditation" coming after "Give ear unto my words" is deeply suggestive. It implies that there was a voiceless meaning in his prayer which was not only more than he could express, but more than he himself could, even to himself, perfectly explain. In the profoundest prayer not only more is meant than meets the ear, but more is meant than the mind itself can quite decipher. And expansion in Rom. viii. is very wonderful, very touching, and encouraging: "We know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." (*B. Gregory, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. **For unto Thee will I pray.**—*Prayer*:—"If you "restrain prayer before God"—1. You act in opposition to your sense and confession of what is right. You know that you ought to pray. How can you repel the charge of inconsistency, when prayer is excluded from your practical system? 2. By neglecting prayer, you resist the authority of God. God has commanded you to pray. Can you venture to treat His command with contempt, and yet hope to prosper? What title have you to expect that, in this particular more than in any other, you can disobey God with impunity? 3. Without prayer vain will be to you all the provisions that are made in the gospel for your deliverance and happiness. The gospel is a dispensation of Divine wisdom and goodness. It proposes to bestow on men the benefits of salvation. But it proposes to bestow them in a certain way, and according to a certain scheme. Do you know any ground for believing that these benefits can ever belong to those who do not pray for them? Lessons: (1) It becomes us to form and adopt the purpose of the Psalmist. His purpose was to pray; and that purpose should be ours. We have many motives and inducements to engage in this exercise. (2) It should be with great earnestness that we pray to God. Not going about the duty in a cold, formal, or perfunctory manner. (3) We are not to pray as if God were unwilling to hear us, and to bestow the blessings which we need. He has revealed Himself as the hearer of prayer. (4) Do not forget that the God to whom you pray is a holy God. Observe that the Psalmist did not satisfy himself with private prayer; he also resolved to engage in the exercises of public worship. The resolution of the Psalmist should be ours. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *The directness of prayer*:—"No priest stands between the worshipper and his Lord. Every man must state his own case. We pray for one another, but not instead of one another. What can be more beautiful than the picture which is thus represented? God is put in His right place as the throned Father, listening to each of His subjects as the subject may feel impelled to address Him. Every word is charged with tremulous life. No man can pray for another in the same exquisite and vital sense as a man can pray for himself; there are always circumstances in the case of the petitioner, which the petitioner alone knows, and even though he cannot throw such circumstances into literal expression he can suggest them all by the very tones of his voice. We mistake the nature of prayer if we think it can be limited to words. Even when we use the words of another in our devotional exercises, we throw into their expres-

sion accents which are personal and incommunicable. It is in such tones and accents that the true quality of prayer is found. If prayer consisted only in the utterance of certain words, then the wicked might pray, and pray with great elocutionary effect; but the prayer is hardly in the words at all, it is a subtle fragrance of the soul, an inexpressible something which we understand most nearly by the name of agony. This being the nature of prayer, it follows that whatever priestly mediation there may be in the universe—and that there is such mediation no student of the Bible can deny—the individual himself must stand in a direct relation to God, receiving help from the priest, but not in any degree to obliterate his personality, or reduce his spiritual enjoyment. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

*On the advantages of prayer:*—Prayer is the pulse of the soul. To be prayerless, or little inclined to pray, is the most dreadful state in which a human being can possibly be. But it is nearly as lamentable to pray under the influence of improper sentiments and feelings, as not to pray at all. It is by no means the province of prayer, to inform the Deity of what we need, or to induce Him to alter His purposes, or to prevail upon Him to bestow upon us whatever we may think fit to solicit from Him. To the omniscient God all our wants must be well known; even better than they are to ourselves. Nor can He be supposed, in consequence of our prayers, either to deviate from the course which He had determined to pursue, or to submit the disposal of His favours to our direction. The advantages of prayer must be considered, as confined to ourselves; and we have only to reflect for a moment on the state and temper of mind which it is instrumental in cherishing, to be convinced that it is eminently calculated to promote our real improvement and happiness.

1. Prayer, in consequence of the dispositions which it excites and cherishes in the mind of the suppliant, is well calculated to produce the happiest effects upon his conduct and condition. There is not an error in the understanding, a wrong propensity in the will, or a blemish in the outward conduct, which may not, either directly or indirectly, be traced to a temper of mind, the reverse of that of the Christian suppliant, and which a similar temper to his would not tend either to prevent or remove.
2. Prayer qualifies the suppliant for receiving the enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting influences of the Divine Spirit. That the Spirit of God can communicate direction, energy, and purity to the soul in a secret and incomprehensible manner, cannot be denied. That it is chiefly by means of prayer such communication is made, is a truth, which the experience of every genuine Christian sufficiently corroborates. Prayer is the means God has appointed to be used for obtaining the influences of the Spirit, and for cherishing that frame and temper of mind which peculiarly qualify him for receiving them.
3. Prayer is happily fitted to fortify against temptation. Our temptations chiefly arise from the world, and the things of the world. The influence which worldly objects produce upon the different tempers and circumstances of men is so great, that it is not to be described. The best way to counteract this influence, is to avert the mind as much as possible from earthly things, and in the frequent exercise of prayer to lay it open to the impression of things invisible and eternal. Prayer renders us independent of the world, by fixing and strengthening our dependence upon God.
4. Prayer imparts to the Christian such a serenity, strength, and stability, as fit him for all that is truly amiable, and great, and good. It renders him serene, composed, and cheerful. Seeing, then, that prayer is attended with such important and blessed effects, how gladly ought we to avail ourselves of this precious privilege! (*J. Somerville, D.D.*)

*Objections to prayer answered:*—No argument has ever been adduced against prayer, which may not be traced to the source of human corruption. Men disrelish the duty of prayer, and then the judgment is set at work to devise arguments against it. Some tell us that they see little or no necessity for prayer: that God, who is rich in mercy, will bless them, whether they pray or not. Many are so irregular in the exercise of this duty, that they can scarcely be said to pray at all. They would pray, and they would not. Their hearts are divided. But how can they imagine that God will be served with a divided heart? Others say, for what purpose are we to pray, seeing that our prayers can have no effect upon God to dispose Him to grant us what we need, to alter His purposes, or to ward off from us those dangers by which we are threatened? Why we are to pray for quite another reason; namely, to produce the greatest and most important, and most beneficial effect upon ourselves. The purpose of prayer is answered, when, through the Divine blessing, a holy frame of mind is thereby wrought in us; when we are brought to yield to the impression of spiritual things. Some well-disposed persons allege that they cannot pray. This does not furnish any reasonable objection to



prayer. Not to pray at all, because we are unable to pray well, is as absurd as it would be in a child not to walk, because it cannot walk with the elegance and grace of a full-grown man. Such an objection is too likely to arise from indolence, and the want of a real disposition to pray. It is not the manner or language of prayer that renders it acceptable to God, but the temper and dispositions with which it is offered up. If the poor afflicted sinner has right dispositions, he will approach the Lord, though in the most imperfect manner. Some sincere Christians say, they are conscious of so much sin and unworthiness, so much weakness and depravity, in the sight of God, that they dare not pray. But they forget the great Intercessor, standing before the throne, with the golden censer in His hand, and offering up much incense with the prayers of the saints. By this, their fears are dissipated. Another objection to prayer is apt to arise in the minds of true Christians. However earnest and sincere they may have been in the performance of this duty, they have no reason to suppose that an answer to their prayers has ever been vouchsafed. This objection is sometimes made when prayers have been answered, but not in the particular form desired. God may have reasons for delaying or withholding answers. The true suppliant does not immediately cease to urge his suit, when he thinks that he is not heard. God knows both what is good for the Christian, and at what time, and in what manner, it should be granted. Therefore it becomes the Christian, instead of lessening his importunity when he thinks he is not heard, to wait with patience, and a renewed earnestness, till God be pleased to vouchsafe to him a gracious answer. (*J. Somerville, D.D.*) *On the nature of prayer:*—Prayer is well defined as an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies. Prayer may be considered as a generic term, including adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving. All these are equally the result of a devotional temper. 1. The true suppliant is deeply conscious of his being in a state of dependence, weakness, ignorance, and inability to promote his own happiness. Without this, there may be a form of prayer, but nothing of its spirit. 2. The true suppliant comes to God in the firm belief of His existence, and with a confidential application to Him, as both able and willing to help all who put their trust in Him. Without such faith and confidence, there can be no such thing as prayer. 3. The true suppliant draws near to God, with clean hands and a pure heart. In all ages and nations, rites of purification have usually preceded the immediate approaches to Deity. If we “regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us.” But imperfection cleaves in a greater or less degree to the people of God in the present life; and as they are deeply conscious of this being the case, and as such a consciousness naturally tends to weaken their confidence in God, observe—4. That the true suppliant draws near to God, through the mediation of His Son, Jesus Christ. “Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Nor is this a recent appointment. 5. The true suppliant, in all his requests at the throne of grace, is regulated by the word and will of God. The desires of mankind are as various as their imaginary wants. The will of God, and not his own will, is the Christian’s guide in devotional duty. Let me remind you of the glorious privilege of prayer; a privilege so great, that by improving it aright, dependent and sinful creatures like ourselves may lean with confidence on the Rock of Ages Himself. But such prayer as has been delineated is no natural attainment. The sentiments and feelings of the true suppliant are the produce of a Divine principle, specially engendered and nourished by Him who is denominated, “the Spirit of grace and supplications.” (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 3. In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee.—How to begin every day with God:**—1. THE GOOD WORK ITSELF THAT WE ARE TO DO. To pray. A duty dictated by the light and law of nature, but which the gospel of Christ gives us better instruction in. See how David expresses his pious resolutions. 1. My voice shalt Thou hear. Understand as promising himself a gracious acceptance with God. “Thou wilt hear.” It is the language of his faith, grounded upon God’s promise, that His ear shall be always open to His people’s cry. Wherever God finds a praying heart, He will be found a prayer-hearing God. Understand as David’s promising God a constant attendance on Him, in the way He has appointed. God understands the language of the heart, and that is the language in which we must speak to God. We must see to it that God hears from us daily. He expects and requires it. Thus He will keep up His authority over us; and testify His love and compassion towards us. We have something to say to God every day: as to a friend

we love, and have freedom with ; as to a master we serve, and have business with. Our happiness is bound up in His favour. We have offended Him, and are daily contracting guilt. We have daily work to do for God and our own souls. We are continually in danger. We are dying daily. We are members of that body whereof Christ is the head, and are concerned to approve ourselves living members. Lay all this together, and consider whether you have not something to say to God every day. If you have all this to say to God, what should hinder you from saying it? Let not distance, or fear, hinder you. Let not His knowing what your business is hinder you. Let not any other business hinder our saying what we have to say to God. II. WE MUST DIRECT OUR PRAYER TO GOD. We must with deliberation and design address ourselves to Him. The term "direct" indicates fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind, to the duty of prayer. It speaks the sincerity of our habitual intention in prayer: the steadiness of our actual regard to God in prayer. III. WE MUST LOOK UP. We must look up in our prayers ; and after our prayers, with an eye of satisfaction and pleasure ; with an eye of observation, what returns God makes to our prayers. Let us be inward with God in every duty, to make heart-work of it, or we make nothing of it. The particular time fixed for this good work is the morning. Then we are fresh and lively. Then we are most free from company and business. Then we have received fresh mercies from God, which we are concerned to acknowledge. In the morning we have fresh matter ministered to us for the adoration of the greatness and glory of God. In the morning we are addressing ourselves to the work of the day, and therefore are concerned by prayer to seek unto God for His presence and blessing. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Morning prayer*.—I. THE CHRISTIAN'S RESOLUTION. To pray. 1. Prayer is a duty and a privilege. It implies spiritual life—filial relationship—freedom of access to God. The spirit of prayer must be earnestly cultivated. 2. God is the supreme and immediate object of prayer. "I will direct my prayer unto Thee." The mediation of priests and saints or of the Virgin Mary superfluous. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble," &c. 3. Prayer must be definite in its aim. "I will direct," &c. A soul soliloquy is not prayer. Nor is the enumeration of the Divine attributes hid. True prayer is the earnest expression of the deep necessities and longings of the soul in the simplest language possible. The grain of prayer should not be lost in the chaff of vague generalities. II. THE BEST TIME FOR PRIVATE PRAYER. "In the morning," &c. 1. There is a greater freedom from the distracting cares of the family, business, &c. 2. We should seek Divine strength in anticipation of duties, trials, temptations, &c. 3. A day begun with prayer, generally proves a happy day. 4. The most eminent Christians have devoted the early morning to prayer. Mention some. III. THE BECOMING ATTITUDE FOR A PRAYERFUL SOUL. "I will look up." Describe watch-tower. 1. We should not be satisfied without the conviction that our prayers have been heard by God. Many prayers never reach the goal of the throne of grace. 2. Our prayers should not be forgotten, but an answer looked for. It will be so if our eye be single and our aim definite. 3. Such an attitude prepares us for the recognition of the Divine hand in answer to our prayers. (*Homilist.*) *Morning devotion*.—The essence of real religion is a filial disposition of heart towards God. 1. Morning is the time for reflection. It seems natural to think, and to be quiet, in the early morning. The very laws of our physical being demand quiet in the morning. 2. Morning is the time for observation. The curtain is drawn aside, and we look upon the face of God's creation. 3. Morning is the time for purpose. We may begin again, every morning, with fresh purposes, that will be achieved if the strength of God is made perfect in our weakness. 4. Morning is the time for prayer. As the morning gives wings to the day, so prayer gives wings to the morning. Wise reflections will become wiser through the power of prayer, and our purposes will only be binding on the conscience, or wrought out in the life, as prayer gives them their character of sincerity or religiousness. Mornings are monitors, text-books, and registers. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The protective power of prayer*.—Among the elegant forms of insect life, there is a little creature known to naturalists, which can gather round it a sufficiency of atmospheric air—and so clothed upon, it descends into the bottom of the pool, and you may see the little diver moving about dry and at his ease, protected by his crystal vesture, though the water all around and above be stagnant and bitter. Prayer is such a protector—a transparent vesture, the world sees it not—but a real defence, it keeps out the world. By means of it, the believer can gather so much of heaven's atmosphere around him, and with it descend into the putrid depths of this contaminating world, that for a season no evil will touch him ; and he knows where to ascend for a new

supply. (*James Hamilton.*) *Morning prayer*:—A battle is every morning fought in every Christian's closet. The morning is the key of the position. The season of morning prayer is, so to speak, the citadel, the Hougomont, the critical point in each successive day. If he wins those morning minutes, the devil knows he has won that day. (*Ibid.*) *The upward look*:—It is said that the monks of Mount Athos are accustomed to hypnotise themselves into trance conditions by gazing at their own bodies—no very ennobling objective if true. In some of the Buddhist monasteries of Eastern Asia devotees are pointed out who have sat facing blank walls for twenty or thirty years and have gazed themselves into mysterious ecstasies. In the modernised Buddhism of London and New York theosophy the same virtue is ascribed to intense and sustained contemplation. What change, think you, ought to effect itself within us if with the same steadfastness we contemplate the personality of Him who is the leader and consummator of our faith? (*Thomas G. Selby.*)

Vers. 4, 5. *Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.*—*The great matters of religion*:—If we inquire how it comes to pass that man is fallen under God's displeasure, the text resolves it all into "wickedness." This is that which makes all the breach between God and us. This is that which hath wrought all the mischief and disorder that ever hath been in the creation of God from the beginning. This is that which hath so sunk and debased the nature of man, and made it so unlike the Divine nature. Whosoever is in love with evil, cannot be in love with the ways of goodness and righteousness. Whosoever consents to iniquity, does voluntarily part with God, and God leaves him. Atheists make the prosperity of wicked men an argument against Divine Providence. To make a man a wicked person in the sense of Scripture, there must be either gross carelessness and neglect of God and religion: voluntary consent to known iniquity, known hypocrisy, or great apostasy, in matters of doctrine, or in matters of practice. Those that are wicked cannot have to do with God; they stand at a great distance from Him, and are banished from His throne. We best know God by imitation and resemblance of Him. We cannot build upon any report concerning God, which a bad man makes; for if he should speak right of God, he would condemn himself. Goodness, which is God's perfection, and wickedness, which is man's acquisition, can no more consist together than light and darkness, health and sickness, soundness and rottenness. Persons of naughty minds have no true thoughts either of God or man. What, then, are the great matters of religion, and what are those things that will consist with it? To reverence and acknowledge the Deity. To live in love, and bear goodwill towards one another. To deal justly, equally, and fairly in all our transactions and dealings each with other. To use moderation and government of ourselves, in the respect of the necessities and conveniences of this state. The following things are matters of offence, and of the creature's ruin. Things contrary to the due respect and regard which we ought to bear towards God. Things that are contrary to the general love and goodwill which ought to run through the whole creation of God. Things contrary to that fairness, justice, righteousness, and equal dealing which ought to be among fellow-servants, among fellow-creatures. Things contrary to the sobriety, chastity, temperance, and due moderation of ourselves. . . . Two things concerning repentance. 1. It doth alter the very temper of the sinner. 2. It is a motive with God, and doth affect Him. It doth procure atonement in respect of God. (*B. Whichcote, D.D.*) *God's hatred of sin*:—1. Some of the grounds of that displeasure which God cherishes towards sin. The justice of God must lead Him to view with displeasure that evil and abominable thing. The love—the service which God requires, is love and obedience. To withhold this service is to act unjustly towards Him. The benevolence of God must ever lead Him to regard sin with abhorrence. What is sin but a soul going away from its Maker, from the great Fountain of living waters? As the great Law-giver of the universe, God must look with deep displeasure on sin. The law is holy, and just and good. When we act in opposition to this law, we, in fact, lift up our testimony against the law. Further, God is the Author of all our mercies, and as such must look with deep displeasure on the workers of iniquity. How great is the debt and obligation under which we are laid to Him by the load of His providential bounty! There has not been a moment of our lives in which the God who made us has not been doing something for us. What must He think of that evil thing which leads to such ingratitude for these blessings? And God must look with displeasure on sin, because it is opposed to all those great schemes, all those grand schemes,



which we read in the Scriptures, of Jehovah having imparted ; such as creation, providence, redemption. 2. Manifestations of the existence and the extent of that hatred of iniquity which God habitually cherishes. We find many such manifestations. Illustration—Angels that lost their first estate. Loss of Eden. Story of Sodom, &c. (*James Marshall, A.M.*) **Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.—God's hatred of sinners:—**Here is a plain declaration. I. THAT GOD DOES HATE THE PERSONS OF IMPENITENT SINNERS. It is often said that God hates sin, but not sinners. The point now to prove is, that God hates sinners themselves, as vile and odious creatures. It is allowed that God loves all that love Him, and it is equally true that He hates those who hate Him. The Old Testament abounds with passages in which God expresses His displeasure, His wrath, and His indignation towards sinners. II. WHY DOES GOD HATE THE PERSONS OF SINNERS? Many consider sin in the abstract, and God as hating it in the abstract. But who can conceive of sin without a sinner? Or of sin that no person ever committed? Every sin is a transgression of the law, and renders the transgressor both criminal and hateful. The transgression cannot be separated from the transgressor, any more than his reason, or conscience, or any other property or quality of his mind can be separated from him. The apostle represents sin as corrupting all the powers and faculties of sinners. This moral corruption of sinners he represents as rendering them vile and hateful, even in their own sight. Their evil hearts render their persons morally evil and hateful in the sight of God. It is holiness of heart that makes saints lovely, and the reverse is equally true of sinners. III. How God's HATING THE PERSONS OF SINNERS IS CONSISTENT WITH HIS LOVING THEM. Some have attempted to evade this difficulty by supposing that all the Scripture says about the displeasure, the hatred, the wrath and anger of God, is to be understood figuratively; and that no such exercises or emotions of heart can exist in the mind of an absolutely perfect and immutable being. But to suppose that God does not really hate sinners is evading rather than solving the difficulty. Others say that God loves sinners themselves, and only hates their sins. But it is abundantly evident from Scripture that God does really and literally love and hate sinners at the same time. What kind of love does God exercise towards sinners? They are not proper objects of approbation or complacence, but of disapprobation and hatred. It is only the love of benevolence that God exercises towards totally depraved sinners. He loves all His creatures, whether rational or irrational. If He loves them with the love of benevolence, He cannot love them with the love of complacence. Benevolence hates selfish and sinful creatures, as much as it loves holy and virtuous creatures. Holiness in the Deity produces love to the holy, and hatred to the unholy. There are two things in sinners which render them objects of both love and hatred. Their capacity to enjoy happiness and suffer misery renders them proper objects of benevolence, and their sinful character renders them proper objects of displeasure, disapprobation, and hatred. God views them in both lights. His love towards them is benevolent love, and His hatred towards them is benevolent hatred. Improvement. 1. If God's hatred of impenitent sinners is consistent with His love of benevolence towards them, then it is consistent with His benevolence to hate them as long as they continue impenitent. 2. If God loves and hates sinners in this world at all, then He loves and hates them more than any other being does in the universe. 3. If impenitent sinners themselves are as much the objects of God's hatred as of His love, then it is very important that they should be made sensible of it. 4. If it be consistent with the benevolence of God towards sinners to hate them, then it is consistent with His benevolence to express His hatred towards them. 5. If God's hatred of impenitent sinners flows from His benevolence, then His punishing them must flow from His benevolence. 6. If it be the benevolence of God that disposes Him to hate and punish impenitent sinners for ever, then it is extremely absurd and dangerous for sinners to rely on His mere benevolence to save them in the eleventh and dying hour. This subject calls on all to inquire and determine whether they are saints or sinners. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The relation of the righteous God to wicked men:—*In the second century, Celsus, a celebrated adversary of Christianity, distorting our Lord's words, complained, "Jesus Christ came into the world to make the most horrible and dreadful society; for He calls sinners and not the righteous; so that the body He came to assemble is a body of profligates, separated from good men, among whom they before were mixed. He has rejected all the good and collected all the bad." "True," said Origen in reply, "our Jesus came to call sinners—but—to repentance. He assembled the wicked—but to convert them into new men, or

rather to change them into angels. We come to Him covetous, He makes us liberal; lascivious, He makes us chaste; violent, He makes us meek; impious, He makes us religious."

Ver. 7. **I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy.—Sanctuary worship:**—This noble resolution. It manifests—I. **AN INDEPENDENCE OF CHARACTER.** "As for me." How many there are who follow the crowd! Whether for evil or good, where the multitude go they will go. Hundreds stay away from the house of God either because it is not fashionable to go there or because they are afraid of being singular. Such was not David's course. II. **A NOBLE DETERMINATION.** "I will come into Thy house." Two or three thoughts will show the nature of the act. 1. David was a king. He might have thought it beneath him to leave his throne and humble himself before God in the worship of the temple. But kings as well as subjects need the pardon of their sins, the help of the Holy Spirit, and the Divine favour. And no king could do a more noble act than show an example of pious devotion. 2. David was a man of war. He was constantly engaged in bitter contests. But he did not, therefore, abstain from attending the house of God. 3. David was a busy man. He had to manage the affairs of a large and distracted kingdom; yet he still found time for attending the house of God. 4. David was a clever man. He was also a good man. He might have said, "What good can I get from the temple? I know the services," &c. But humility always attends those who have real merit, while those who have little to boast of fail to avail themselves of opportunities of improvement because of their self-conceit. A real Christian feels his deficiencies. III. **A WORTHY OBJECT.** "I will come into Thy house." Public worship is the most important part of Christian life. 1. It is obeying the Divine command. The duty of gathering ourselves together is imposed upon us in many parts of the Scriptures. Not only was it insisted upon in the Old Testament, but it is still more urged in the New. 2. It is the means of developing the Christian life. In the assemblies of the saints the Holy Spirit was given at first, and is still bestowed. Here spirituality is deepened and the work of conversion carried on. 3. It is the appointed means of communing with God. We can pray in private; but we have particular access in the house of prayer. (*Homilist.*) *The tribute of worship:*—From the sense the Psalmist had of God's manifold, repeated favours to him, from the multitude of the Divine mercies towards him, he would be always glad and ready to resort to the house of God; there to prostrate himself with all humble reverence, and there to pay Him the tribute of a public and solemn worship. I. **THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS RESOLUTION.** His reason in this instance was indeed occasional and particular, and but one of the many motives which persuade to the discharge of this important duty. Consider well the intrinsic grounds of that fitness which it is so generally agreed there is in the worship of our Maker. Moral duties have, besides His will and pleasure, reasons of their own. How doth the relation of a reasonable creature to an all-perfect Creator, infinite in wisdom, goodness, and power, introduce the fitness of any application from the one to the other, in the offices of religious worship? How should it appear, if God had not commanded it, that He would either expect or accept such a service from us? With what view do we lay our wants before Him? Doth He not know them beforehand much better than we do? Or doth His goodness want solicitation to induce Him to be yet more gracious than He is? Or when we deprecate the punishment of our sins, and implore His merciful pardon, do we intend to make our impressions upon the tenderness of His nature? Or when we approach Him with the charity of our intercessions for His mercies and blessings to our fellow-creatures, is it that we are better than they? Are we more mindful of their interests than He is? Or when we praise Him for His benefits with joyful lips, do we mean by the pleasing sound of our eucharistical oblations to engage His goodness in the more and further largesses of His favour? If these are improper regards, what more proper reason will be left for the support of our worship? Why are we commanded to pray? Because prayer recognises and settles upon our minds a sense of those several attributes and perfections in God, the dutiful and cordial acknowledgment whereof is most likely to maintain and preserve us in the state of dependence and subjection we were made for. When we approach God in the humble strains of penitential sorrow, what a scene of melting and moving considerations must open to our minds! What indignation that we have not yet approved, what fear that we may not, what vehement desire that we may approve our hearts before Him in all holy obedience. Do we engage in the charitable office of

intercession for others? The seeds of mutual benevolence are fostered hereby and greatly cultivated. We cannot ask with any decency the forgiveness of their sins at the hands of God, whose trespasses against ourselves we should not be willing to remit or pardon. Finally, the offices of praise and thanksgiving add the motives of gratitude to the sense of our dependence, and inspire us with a more generous and honourable principle of obedience. II. THE FITNESS OF THE PLACE HE CHOSE FOR IT. The palace of God's holiness where numbers resorted for the purposes of public prayer and thanksgiving. An appropriate place is necessary to the purposes of public worship. III. THE MANNER OF EXECUTING THE PIOUS RESOLUTION. In the fear of God with an awful sense of His wisdom, goodness, and power. With reverence and godly fear. This every attribute of God, when duly improved to us by proper reflections, may help to enforce and to inculcate. Even the forgiveness that there is with Him, by the manner and method wherein we partake of it, was, with our holy Psalmist, a motive to the fear of Him. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.—*The Christian worshipping in God's temple*:—Two qualifications of a right worshipper of Jehovah are here set before us. 1. "I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy." He seems to trace all the multitudinous streams of the Divine goodness to one great fountain, and then as he looks at that fountain overflowing on every side, and pouring out its waters in those numberless streams, he calls it a multitudinous fountain; he says, "The multitude of Thy mercy." He will go to God's house—(1) With a thankful remembrance of the Lord's great mercies past. (2) With a lively sense of God's great mercy now. And (3) With great expectations from His mercy. 2. "In Thy fear will I worship." Fear, as we generally experience it, is a humiliating and painful feeling. We suffer under it, and are ashamed of it. And because of this, we cannot disconnect the ideas of pain and humiliation from it. But fear is not necessarily a painful thing. Real godliness is called a "holy fear of God." Perfect love does indeed cast out fear; but what fear? Only the fear that hath torment; servile fear. The fear David means here, is that feeling which naturally arises in the human mind from the contemplation of any object immensely superior to ourselves. It is made up of admiration, awe, and reverence. The phrase "worship toward His holy temple," is taken from a custom among the Jews of always turning towards the temple or tabernacle when they prayed. 3. See these two things conjoined. They may be conjoined; and it is good for us to have these two things conjoined. The union qualifies us for the service and worship of God in His house. And these feelings must correspond with God's character. Let us all, then, seek to cultivate these holy feelings. (*C. Bradley.*) *Worship, a sight of God*:—Belief in God is the great regenerating force of the world. The loss which the unbeliever suffers is enormous. For it does matter what God a man believes in, for his character will be as his faith. Darwin says, "That with the existence of the more civilised races the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing Deity has had a potent influence in the advancement of morality." But morality means the highest welfare of mankind. Faith in God depends upon culture: we are not born believers. There are races who seem to have no such faith; and there seems, alas, in too many Christian countries, a tendency to revert to primitive barbarism in this respect! Its beginning may be detected in the neglect of public religious service. When a man begins to neglect his church, he loses one of the things which keep faith in God alive within him. But if such faith is to be a power, it must have some finer education than can be had from mere formal attendance at church; it must, in fact, be a sight of God. This is the highest act of religious service, it is the act and state of worship. What is worship? It does not mean all sorts of religious services, but it is one particular state of mind. And this not a self-regarding one. It seeks not to get something for itself, though indeed it gains much. But that is not its object, which is the looking upon that which attracts the mind by its own intrinsic worth or worthiness. This is the real meaning of the word "worship." Of the self-regarding states are our appetites and passions. They are for self. And prayer, whilst it looks to God, is yet that it may gain for self. Its two great words are, Give and Forgive. But there are states of mind which look quite away from self. Nature, in her highest moods, and Art, in some of its grandest expressions, are able to thus absorb us and hold us spellbound. The mind is taken out of itself and placed in a strange mysterious atmosphere. And so worship is the mind entranced, fascinated, spellbound by the sight of what God is in Himself. Thus worship implies a sight of God. But not any sight. Some views of God are so oppressive and terrifying as to paralyse the mind with fear. For



many practically hold God to be the author of evil rather than of good, and think of Him only to find out how they may appease Him. They come before Him in awful dread. But the highest form of religious service—seen with such lofty pathsos in the worship of our Lord and Master, and presented to us as the absorbing occupation of heaven—is the beatific vision of God and the dwelling upon Him until earthly pains and sorrows and sins fall off from us and all is tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

“In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request,  
Rapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.”

Now we might and should have more of this Divine elevation in our religious services. If there were there would be no fear of the neglect of public worship. But for this we must prepare ourselves. Like David we should sit still for a while. We should come as he says, here in the text, that he will come. In praise we have the best opportunity of rising to adoration, as in the “Te Deum” and in the “Gloria in Excelsis.” But we cannot drop into a grand view of God as we drop into our seats at church. To such an elevation we must climb. This is the ideal after which we should reach. It is no sterile contemplation. It gives tone to the character, and dignity to the life. (*W. Page Roberts.*) *The solemn service of God:—*

I. THE MOTIVES WE HAVE TO JOIN IN THE SOLEMN SERVICE OF GOD. One leading object which we ought to have in view is to promote the glory of God by the conversion or confirmation of others; but still it is in consideration of His mercy that we magnify Jehovah in His other attributes. The Psalmist considered it to be an invaluable privilege that he was permitted to take part in the solemn and public worship of God. He knew the comfort and benefit which flowed from that privilege. II. THE DISPOSITIONS TO BE ACQUIRED IN ORDER THAT IT MAY BE AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE. The value to ourselves depends on the use we make of it, and on the state of our own hearts. The true worshipper is studious. 1. To bring into the sanctuary a purified heart, at least a heart that seeks to be purified; and to experience, in the serious and faithful use of the appointed means of grace, the renewing and refreshing influences of that Spirit who helpeth our infirmities. 2. The spirit of purity requires a spirit of fear. “In Thy fear will I worship.” We are invited, by the Sabbath bell, to an act of solemn and direct intercourse with our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, and our Judge. Is that an employment which we can presume to take in hand without the most serious consideration, the most entire collectedness of thought, the warm glow of thankfulness and love? 3. The worship must be attended with faith and hope. The experience of mercies past, and the sure promise of their continuance, the gracious invitations and affectionate expostulations of Him who has described Himself as hearing and answering prayer, should fill us with the spirit of supplication. God loves to listen to the united praises of those who are met together in His name. (*Bishop Bloomfield.*)

Ver. 8. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness.—*A resolve and a prayer:—* God is addressed as a friend. Three things in David’s prayer. 1. What is the rule according to which he looks for this Divine guidance? “Lead me in Thy righteousness.” The righteousness here is God’s faithfulness. All God’s dealings with His people have been faithful. 2. Why he wishes this leading. It is that he may be divinely instructed in the right path. The Christian may sometimes be in a state of great perplexity as to the way he should go. He desires Divine guidance in the path of Christian experience, in the path of practice, and in the path of precept. 3. The motive he pleads to enforce it with God. The margin reads—“Because of my observers.” Who are our observers? The world, fellow-Christians, ministers, angels, and God. (*William Jay.*) *Make Thy way straight before my face.—Practical paths:—*Two men aspire to be inventors of first-rate rank. The one spends all his life in study and experiment, and lights upon nothing new; but the other has some surprising discovery to put before the public every year or two. How do we explain the difference? Is it luck and nothing more? The unsuccessful inventor, with perhaps equal ingenuity, is following impracticable and unremunerative paths for a lifetime. The successful inventor knows in what

direction others have toiled without profit, and scarcely ever spends a week on a misleading scent. His shrewd despair of finding anything new or remunerative in certain directions shuts him up to one golden path of fruitful research. (*Thomas G. Selby.*)

Ver. 11. Because Thou defendest them.—*Our Protector*.—I. THE LORD IS OUR GOOD PROTECTOR. 1. A sympathising Protector. He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye. 2. A sure Protector. He will save us with His right hand. 3. A personal Protector. He does not deal with the mass, but with the individual. 4. An everlasting Protector. Underneath us are the everlasting arms. 5. A loving Protector. The most endearing images are used in the Bible to tell us of the love of our God. II. THE CONDITION REQUIRED. They who would be protected must trust themselves in His care and be guided by His wishes. Is it not easy to trust in Him when we remember His almighty power, His perfect wisdom, and that He is our loving Father? III. THE PROTECTION HE AFFORDS TO HIS TRUSTING PEOPLE. He protects us—1. From the slavery of sin. 2. From the penalty of transgression. 3. From the penalty which our sin leaves on us. 4. From the despair of failure. (*W. Birch.*) *Trust and joy in God*.—At an early period of his life Mozart, the composer, gave his heart to God. When he was twenty-one years of age he wrote, "I have God always before me. Whatever is according to His will is according to mine, therefore I cannot fail to be happy and contented."

## PSALM VI.

VERS. 1-10. O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger.—*A song of sorrow*.—It is needless to look for a historical occasion of the Psalm; but to an ear that knows the tones of sorrow, or to a heart that has itself uttered them, the supposition that in these pathetic cries we hear only a representative Israelite bewailing the national ruin sounds singularly artificial. If ever the throb of personal anguish found tears and a voice, it does so in this Psalm. Whoever wrote it wrote with his blood. There are in it no obvious references to events in the recorded life of David, and hence the ascription of it to him must rest on something else than the interpretation of the Psalm. The worth of this little plaintive cry depends on quite other considerations than the discovery of the name of the singer, or the nature of his sorrow. It is a transcript of a perennial experience, a guide for a road which all feet have to travel. Its stream runs turbid and broken at first, but calms and clears as it flows. It has four curves or windings, which can scarcely be called strophes without making too artificial a framework for such a simple and spontaneous gush of feeling. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The cry of the penitent*.—The strains of this Psalm are two—vers. 1-7, the petition to God for himself; and vers. 8-10, an insultation over his enemies. I. THE PETITION. 1. A deprecation of evil. He prays God to avert His wrath. 2. A petition of good. He entreats to be partaker of God's favour, both to his body and to his soul. The petition he enforceth upon divers and weighty reasons: from the quantity and degrees of his calamity; from the continuance of it; from the consequences that were like to follow. That he was brought to death's door is seen by three symptoms, sighs and groans, tears, eyes melted away. Moreover, he had many ill-willers. II. THE INSULTATION. At last, receiving joy and comfort from his penitential tears, he begins to look up, and from his complaint he turns upon his enemies, who gaped after his death, and over them he insults (an old word for "he glories"). He rejects these reprobates from him with scorn and indignation. He assigns the cause in effect, because God had been moved by his prayer to reject them. Then follows his imprecation; made up of three ingredients, which he prays may light on them—shame and confusion, vexation, eversion. These two last he aggravates by the weight and speed. He desires that their vexation should be nor easy, nor mild, but very sore; and that their shame and overthrow linger not, but be present, hasty, and sudden. (*William Nicholson, D.D.*) *The penitent suppliant*.—Though God will be no example of upbraiding or reproaching repented sins, when God hath so far expressed His love as to bring that sinner to that repentance, and so to mercy, yet, that He may perfect His own care, He exercises that repentant sinner with such medicinal corrections as may enable him to stand upright for the future. I. THE

PERSON UPON WHOM DAVID TURNED FOR SUCCOUR. His first access is to God only. It is to God by name, not to any universal God. That name in which he comes to Him here is the name Jehovah, His radical, fundamental, primary, essential name. II. FOR WHAT HE SUPPLICATES. His prayer is but deprecatory; he does but pray that God would forbear him. He pretends no error, he enterprises no reversing of judgment; at first he dares not sue for pardon, he only desires a reprieve, a respite of execution, and that not absolutely either; but he would not be executed in hot blood, not in God's anger, not in His hot displeasure. To be rebuked was but to be chidden, to be chastened, to be beaten; and yet David was heartily afraid of the first, of the least of them, when it was done to him in anger. "Rebuke" here means reprove, convince by way of argument and disputation. What David deprecates is not the disputing, impleading, correcting, but that anger which might change the nature of all and make the physic poison. When there was no anger in the case David was a forward scholar to hearken to God's reasoning. Both these words "chasten" and "hot displeasure" are words of a heavy, vehement significance. David foresees that if God rebuke in anger it will come to chastening in hot displeasure. (*John Donne.*) *The prayer of the afflicted soul:*—1. In our afflictions we must look to God, and not to secondary causes. 2. To go to God for help in our distresses. When, then, we are wounded, we must go to one who can cure us, even Him who hath heaved us up, and cast us down again, and will again raise us up. 3. Prayer is our wings to fly to God in our affliction. 4. Means by which God brings us to obedience. (1) His Word. (2) His rod. If we refuse to be ruled by God's Word, then God will not fail to correct us with His rod. (*A. Symon.*) *Rebuke needed:*—As I deserve it for my sin, so I need it for my amendment, for without rebuking what amending?—what amending, indeed, without Thy rebuking? for, alas! the flesh flatters me, the world abuseth me, Satan deludes me; and now, O God, if Thou also shouldst hold Thy peace and wink at my follies, whom should I have—alas! whom could I have—to make me sensible of their foulness? If Thou shouldst not tell me, and tell me roundly, I went astray, how should I ever—alas! how could I ever—be brought to return into the right way? To Thy rebuking, therefore, I humbly submit myself. I know Thou intendest it for my amendment, and not for my confusion; for my conversion, and not for my subversion. It may be bitter in the tasting, but is most comfortable in the working; hard, perhaps, to digest, but most sovereign being digested. Yet I cannot endure Thou shouldst rebuke me in anger; I cannot endure it in affection, but I can less endure it in ability. When I consider with myself the many favours—undeserved favours—Thou hast vouchsafed unto me, and consider withal how little use, how ill use I have made of them all, though I know I have justly deserved Thy rebuking, yet my hope is still Thou wilt add this favour also, not to rebuke me in Thine anger. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *Angry chastening deprecated:*—If Thy chastening be intended for reforming or for polishing, what wouldst Thou do with indignation, that tends to abolishing? (*Ibid.*) *Rebuke combined with anger:*—Thy rebuking, O God, is to me as thunder, but Thine anger is as lightning; and is it not enough that Thou terrify my soul with the thunder of Thy rebuking, but Thou wilt also set this flax of my flesh on fire with the lightning of Thine anger? Thy rebuking of itself is a precious balm, but mixed with anger turns to a corrosive. (*Ibid.*) *God's anger terrible:*—A certain king, being once very sad, his brother asked what ailed him. "Oh, brother," he said, "I have been a great sinner, and am afraid to die and appear before God in judgment." His brother only laughed at him for his melancholy thoughts. The king said nothing, but in the dead of night sent the executioner to sound his trumpet before his brother's door, that being the signal for a man to be led out to execution. Pale and trembling, his brother came in haste to the king and asked to know his crime. "Oh, brother," said the king, "you have never offended against me; but if the sight of the executioner be so dreadful, shall not I, who have grievously offended God, fear to be brought before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ?" *Angerless reproof often most effective:*—There was a boy at Norfolk Island who had been brought from one of the rougher and wilder islands, and was consequently rebellious and difficult to manage. One day Mr. Selwyn spoke to him about something he had refused to do, and the lad, flying into a passion, struck him in the face. This was an unheard of thing for a Melanesian to do. Mr. Selwyn, not trusting himself to speak, turned on his heel and walked away. The boy was punished for the offence; and, being still unsatisfactory, was sent back to his own island without being baptized, and there relapsed into heathen ways. Many years



afterwards Mr. Bice, the missionary who worked on that island, was sent for to a sick person who wanted him. He found this very man in a dying state, and begging to be baptized. He told Mr. Bice how often he thought of the teaching on Norfolk Island; and when the latter asked him by what name he should baptize him, he said, "Call me John Selwyn, because he taught me what Christ was like that day when I struck him; and I saw the colour mount in his face, but he never said a word except of love afterwards." Mr. Bice then baptized him, and he died soon after. (*Life of Bishop John Selwyn.*)

*The difference between a cross and a curse:*—David deprecates not God's rebukes or corrections, but that He would not rebuke him in His anger. It is true there is a great similitude between a curse and a cross, and oftentimes God's children have been deceived thereby, and through His hard handling of them have judged Him to have become their enemy; but indeed there is a great difference. And to the end ye may know whether they come from the hands of a loving God or no, consider these marks and tokens. 1. If they lead thee to a consideration of thy sin, which is the ground and cause of them, so that thou lookest not to the instrumental or second cause, but to thyself, the cause of all, they come from the hand of a loving God. 2. If they make thee leave off to sin and reject it, they come from a loving God. 3. If under thy cross thou run unto God, whom thou hast pierced, that He may deliver thee, and not say with that godless King Jehoram, Why should I attend any more upon the Lord? they come from a loving God. 4. The Cross worketh in the godly a wonderful humility and patience, so that they submit themselves under the hand of the living God, that they under it may be tamed, and from lions be made lambs. The wicked either howl (as do dogs that are beaten) through sense of their present stroke, or if they be humbled and seem patient, it is perforce as a lion which is caged and cannot stir. (*A. Symson.*)

*The anger of God as pure as His mercy:*—But alas, those persons did not consider the difference betwixt the qualities that are in our sinful nature, and the essential properties which are in God; for He is angry and sins not. His anger is as pure as His mercy, for His justice is His anger, but our anger is mixed with sin, and therefore evil. (*Ibid.*)

*God's anger against sin:*—God will be angry at nothing in His creatures, but only sin, which bringeth man to destruction; for as if a father saw a serpent in his child's bosom, he would hate the serpent notwithstanding his love to the boy: so we are God's children, He loves that which He made of us, our body and soul, and hates that which the devil hath put in us, our sin. (*Ibid.*)

*Neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure.*—*A revengeful God the creation of a guilty conscience:*—There are two knowledges of God; the one is the absolute, the other is the relative. The former comprehends God as He is, embraces the Infinite; the other comprehends only glances of Him, as He appears to the mind of the observer. There is but one being in the universe who has the former knowledge, and that is Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only Begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him." David's idea of God here was relative. He represents the Eternal as He appeared to him in the particular state of mind which he experienced. We make two remarks on his idea of God's "hot displeasure." I. IT WAS GENERATED IN A GUILTY CONSCIENCE BY GREAT SUFFERING. The writer of this Psalm was involved in the greatest distress both in body and in mind. 1. That he was conscious of having wronged his Maker. His conscience robes infinite love with vengeance. 2. He was conscious of having deserved God's displeasure. He felt that the sufferings he was enduring were penal inflictions, and he justly deserved them. Had his conscience been appeased by atoning love, the very sufferings he was enduring would have led him to regard the great God as a loving Father disciplining him for a higher life, and not as a wrathful God visiting him in His hot displeasure. God is to you according to your moral state. II. IT WAS REMOVED FROM HIS GUILTY CONSCIENCE BY EARNEST PRAYER. His prayer for mercy is intensely importunate. "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger," &c. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord." "O Lord, heal me." "O Lord, deliver my soul," &c. What is the result of his prayer? "Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping," &c. True prayer does two things. 1. Modifies for the better the mind of the suppliant. It tends to quicken, to calm, to elevate the soul. 2. Secures the necessary assistance of the God of love. One great truth that comes up from the whole of these remarks is that man's destiny depends upon his moral state, and that no system can effectually help him, that does not bring his heart into a right relation with God. So long as God appears to him burning with "hot displeasure" he must be in an agony like

that which the Psalmist here describes. The mission of Christianity is to bring men into this happy relation. (*Homilist.*)

**Ver. 2. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak.**—*Cure for the soul's weakness:*—There is a very immediate connection between soul-sickness and bodily ailments. The material affects the mental, and presently the mental affects the soul. When David was weak in body he became more than ever conscious of his sinful condition before God. And the enemy took advantage of his weakness, and oppressed him when his heart was sore sick. The saint's extremity becomes the devil's opportunity to annoy and to distress him. But he was by no means forsaken of his God. **I. THE COMPLAINT**—soul weakness. It is not a disease exactly, and yet there are points about it which make it very much like a disease. Many persons cannot say they are ill, but there is a lack of physical force, a lack of stamina. They are the weaklings of the flock; and it is so in Christian experience. There are Christians lacking that power which makes a man act like a man, and speak like a man, and think with vigour and purpose. Next to listlessness, there is with these invalids a sort of fretfulness. Everything—even the grasshopper—becomes a burden to them. Then there comes to these poor sick souls a sort of fearfulness, their nervous force has gone. These people are very retiring in disposition—nervous, and bashful, and hesitating, very timid and timorous. What are the causes of this spiritual disease? Some are born frail. But the weakness is often due to the disease of harbouring unkind thoughts about anybody. An unhealthy climate is often the reason, physically speaking, for weakness of health. Weakness may be due to unwholesomeness of food. **II. THE PRESCRIPTION.** “Have mercy upon me, O Lord.” God's mercy must be the antidote for my misery. This is the only remedy for spiritual weakness. If I go to the physician and complain of weakness he will probably give me some medicine which may not be very palatable. Well, then, take the medicine. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*) *The cry for mercy:*—To fly and escape the anger of God, he sees no means in heaven or in earth, and therefore he retires himself to God, even to Him who wounded him, that He might heal him. He flies not with Adam to the bush, nor with Saul to the witch, nor with Jonas to Tarshish, but he appeals from an angry and just God to a merciful God. Next, observe what David craves—mercy; whereby we may perceive that he was brought to a consideration of his own misery, or else he needed not to have asked for mercy. Then it is necessary, that to the end we may more effectually crave pardon, every one of us first have a sense and feeling of our own sin and misery. Moreover, see that David doth not present his merits, whereby to redeem the filthiness of his sins, neither yet prayers, praises, almsdeeds, victory over God's foes, wherein he was frequent, but he leaveth them all as a broken reed, to the which he could not well lean in the day of his spiritual temptation, and hath his only refuge in God's mercy. The merits of men (alas!) what are they? The best works we do are so full of imperfections that there is more dross than gold in them. What man would be content for good gold to receive such coin as is near-by altogether dross? And think ye God for His perfect law, which He gave us to observe and do, will receive our imperfect works? David, under the name of mercy, includeth all things, according to that of Jacob to his brother Esau, “I have gotten mercy, and therefore I have gotten all things.” Desirest thou anything at God's hands? Cry for mercy, out of which fountain all good things will spring to thee. The blind men, seeking their sight, cried, “Have mercy upon us, Thou Son of David.” The Canaanite, who had her daughter possessed, cried, “Have mercy upon me.” If ye have purchased the King's pardon, then ye may enjoy the privileges of His kingdom; if ye have mercy, ye have all that God can give you, ye have title to Christ, to heaven, to all the creatures, ye are freed and delivered from the prison of hell. (*A. Symson.*) *A good plea for the penitent:*—But is this not a weak plea, to allege weakness for a plea? weak indeed with men who commonly tread hardest upon the weakest, and are ever going over where the hedge is lowest; but no weak plea with God, whose mercy is ever ready upon all occasions, and then most when there is most need; and seeing there is greatest need where there is greatest weakness, therefore no plea with God so strong as this, Have mercy upon me, O God, for I am weak. But why should David pray for mercy to help his weakness? for what can mercy do? Mercy can but pity his weakness; it is strength that must relieve it. But is it not that mercy, I may say, is as the steward of God's house, and hath the command of all He hath; that if wisdom be wanting for direction, mercy can procure it; if justice be wanting for defence,

mercy can obtain it; if strength be wanting for support, mercy can command it; and therefore no plea so perfect to be urged with God as this, Have mercy upon me, O God, for I am weak? But why should David make his weakness a motive to God for mercy? for is not weakness an effect of sin? and can God love the effect when He hates the cause? But it is not the weakness in David that God loves, but the acknowledging of his weakness; for what is this but the true humility! and who knows not in how high account such humility is with God, seeing it is indeed of this wonderful condition, that though nothing be so low, yet nothing reacheth so high, and therefore no motive so fit to move God as this, Have mercy upon me, O God, for I am weak. Mercy, indeed, looks down upon no object so directly as upon weakness, and weakness looks up to no object so directly as to mercy; and therefore they cannot choose but meet, and meeting, not choose but embrace each other: mercy, weakness as her client; weakness, mercy as her patron; that no plea can be so strong with God as this, Have mercy upon me, O God, for I am weak. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *An argument taken from weakness:*—But behold what rhetoric he trieth to move God to cure him: "I am weak"; an argument taken from his weakness; which indeed were a weak argument to move any man to show his favour, but is a strong argument to prevail with God. If a diseased person would come to a physician, and only lament the heaviness of his sickness, he would say, "God help thee"; or an oppressed person come to a lawyer, and show him the estate of his action and ask his advice, he would answer, "That is a golden question"; or to a merchant to crave raiment, he will either have present money or a surety; or a courtier for favour, you must have your reward ready in your hand. But coming before God, the most forcible argument ye can use is your necessity, poverty, tears, misery, unworthiness, and confessing them to Him, it shall be an open door to furnish you with all things that He hath. (*A. Symson, B.D.*) *A forcible plea:*—The tears of our misery are forcible arrows to pierce the heart of our heavenly Father, to deliver us and pity our hard case. The beggars lay open their sores to the view of the world, that the more they may move men to pity them. So let us deplore our miseries to God, that He, with the pitiful Samaritan, at the sight of our wounds may help us in due time. (*Ibid.*) *O Lord, heal me.—Healing:*—There is something very soothing, very beautiful in that word "Heal." It seems so full of beneficence, so full of restoration, so full of balm. "Heal," so near "Health"—it is a beautiful word. The healing is found in Him. There are some medicines which are called polychrists, they heal so many diseases. Heaven knows but one Polychrist. It is one to heal not only many diseases, but all, and that one is the touch of Christ. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*)

Ver. 3. *My soul is sore vexed.—Yoke-fellows in sin, yoke-fellows in punishment:*—Yoke-fellows in sin are yoke-fellows in pain; the soul is punished for informing, the body for performing, and as both the informer and performer, the cause and the instrument, so shall the stirrer up of sin and executor be punished. (*A. Symson, B.D.*) *But Thou, O Lord, how long?—The delays of God:*—1. That there is an appointed time, which God hath measured, for the crosses of all His children, before which time they shall not be delivered, and for which they must patiently attend, not thinking to prescribe time to God for their delivery or limit the Holy One of Israel. The Israelites remained in Egypt till the complete number of 430 years were accomplished. Joseph was three years and more in the prison till the appointed time of his delivery came. The Jews remained 70 years in Babylon. So that as the physician appointeth certain times to the patient, both wherein he must fast and be dieted, and wherein he must take recreation: so God knoweth the convenient times both of our humiliation and exaltation. 2. See the impatiency of our natures in our miseries, our flesh still rebelling against the Spirit, which oftentimes forgetteth itself so far that it will enter into reasoning with God, and quarrelling with Him, as we may read of Job, Jonas, &c., and here also of David. 3. Albeit the Lord delay His coming to relieve His saints, yet He hath great cause if we ponder it; for, when we were in the heat of our sins, many times He cried by the mouth of His prophets, "O fools, how long will you continue in your folly?" and we would not hear. And therefore, when we are in the heat of our pains, thinking long, yea, every day a year till we are delivered, no wonder it is if God will not hear. Let us consider with ourselves the just dealing of God with us, that as He cried, and we would not hear; so now we cry, and He will not hear. (*Ibid.*) *Broken prayers:*—I. AN INSTANCE OF WHAT MAY BE



**CALLED A BROKEN PRAYER.** Dr. Maclaren calls it "daring and pregnant in its incompleteness." Is it not natural that prayer should often be incomplete? The man who has never broken down in his prayer has hardly yet learned to pray. 1. Prayer must be broken at times, because some petitions we would offer we may not. Prayer has sometimes to be restrained. 2. Because we cannot tell how to pray. True piety has its dilemmas. What may precisely meet our need cannot always be defined. 3. Because words cannot compass our desires. The intensest feelings of our hearts cannot find adequate expression. II. **BROKEN PRAYERS MAY BE THE MOST EARNEST EXPRESSIONS OF THE SOUL.** The Psalmist's very earnestness brings him to a standstill. Such a break is the safety-valve of the impassioned soul. Prayer is often most sincere when it is least eloquent. A sob may be a real prayer. III. **THAT PRAYERS ARE BROKEN DOES NOT PREVENT THEM FROM BEING HEARD AND ANSWERED.** If this Psalm opens amid the thick gloom of troublous misgiving, it does not close till a new light has chased these shadows away. However poor and faltering our own words, we shall not be disappointed about an answer. God can interpret the prayer that has never even found utterance. When a man begins to pray, however brokenly, light is not far off. (*G. Edward Young.*)

**Ver. 4. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul.**—*A postulatory prayer*:—"O Lord, return" implies a former presence, a present absence, and a confidence for the future. This is God's return to us, in a general apprehension. After He hath made us, and blest us in our nature and by His natural means, He returns to make us again, to make us better, first by His preventing grace and then by a succession of His particular graces. In Scripture there are three significations of the word translated "return." 1. To return to that place to which a thing is naturally affected. So heavy things return to the centre, and light things to the expansion. The Church is God's place, God's centre, to which He is naturally affected. 2. The word is also referred to the passion of God, to the anger of God; and so the returning of God—that is, of God's anger—is the allaying, the becalming, the departing of His anger. When God returns, God stays; His anger is returned from us, but God is still with us. 3. The word applies to our returning to Him. There goes no more to salvation but such a turning. So that this returning of the Lord is an operative, an effectual returning, that tunes our hearts, and eyes, and hands, and feet to the ways of God, and produces in us repentance and obedience; for these be the two legs which our conversion to God stands upon. When the Lord comes to us by any way, though He come in corrections, in chastisements, not to turn to Him is an irreverent and unrespective negligence. . . . We come now to the reasons of these petitions in David's prayer. His first reason is grounded on God Himself. "Do it for Thy mercy's sake." And in his second reason, though David himself and all men with him seem to have a part, yet at last we shall see the reason itself to determine wholly or entirely in God, too, and in His glory. "Do it, Lord, for in death there is no remembrance of Thee." (*John Donne.*) *The obscured presence of God*:—As the sun goeth not out of Thee, though it may be obscured by overcasting clouds, or some other natural impediments, so, albeit the clouds of our sins and miseries hide the fair, shining face of God from us, yet He will pierce through and dissipate those clouds, and shine clearly upon us in His own appointed time. God is said to "return to us," not by change of place, for He is in all places, but by the dispensation of His gracious providence, and declaration of His new mercies and benefits to us. (*A. Symson.*) *For the sake of mercy*:—Indeed, this motive, for His mercy's sake, is the first mover of all motives to God for showing His favour. He had never delivered the Israelites out of Egypt but for His mercy's sake; He had never saved Noah in the ark but for His mercy's sake; but, above all, He had never sent His Son to save the world but for His mercy's sake. And how, then, can I doubt, and not rather be confident, that for His mercy's sake He will also deliver my soul and save me? Never, therefore, my soul, look after any further motives; for upon this motive will I set up my rest. His mercy shall be both my anchor and my harbour; it shall be both my armour and my fortress; it shall be both my ransom and my garland; it shall be both my deliverance and my salvation. (*Sir Richard Baker.*)

**Ver. 5. In death there is no remembrance of Thee.**—*Does consciousness cease with death?*—There is some obscurity in these words, literally understood. They at least seem to teach that all thought and consciousness ceased with man at his death.

If that be their meaning, they certainly show that David's views of a future life were quite defective. If that be their meaning, we may well say, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. We can hardly believe, however, that David meant to teach that thought and consciousness ceased with man at death. The death here intended is probably the second death, and the grave intended the prison of the lost: that is the "death," and that the "grave," from which David prays to be saved—the death and the grave of "both body and soul in hell." And surely there is no grateful remembrance of, and giving thanks to, God there. On the contrary, all who have experienced that death, and descended into that grave, gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven. In view of such an issue, well might David pray, "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; O save me for Thy mercies' sake." For surely a more terrific thought cannot be presented to the human soul, than the thought that it must remain a pining and suffering creature for ever, a moral blot on every part of the universe to which it may flee; hateful in its own eyes, and hateful in the eyes of God. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) In the grave who shall give Thee thanks?—*Death makes life important.*—This Psalm is the first of those called penitential, and composed in confession of sin. From consideration of birth-sin the writer turns to the littleness of man, and the shortness of life compared with God's greatness and goodness. As references to the silence of the grave and the departure of the dead occur frequently, we may ask in what sense we are to take such words. David evidently understood that this life is our only period of probation. He had apprehensions of a judgment-day. David felt that, whatever he was to be, to become, to receive, or to suffer, in the state beyond the grave, was all to be begun while he was in the flesh. David felt how essential to his happiness it was to obtain God's favour, and that at once, without delay. All our hopes beyond the grave rest on our few years' passage through this life. There is no preparation after it. We are hastening on to the unalterable state, where we shall praise God for ever, or never. We are like the sculptor, chiselling an inscription upon marble. Well done or badly done, clearly engraved or badly formed, or wrongly spelt, still those letters remain in imperishable characters. The sculptor's success, or his mistakes, both remain; no time will fade, no water will wash away, what is engraved in stone. So with our heavenly and eternal work, "the time is short"; but its records and its effects are lasting; they endure from generation to generation. Let us be stirred up by such thoughts to engrave for ourselves in the imperishable records of the Book of Life the record of a life spent by us, through God's grace, to His honour and in His service. (*W. J. Stracey, M.A.*) *The Psalmist's Sheol.*—The second plea is striking both in its view of the condition of the dead, and in its use of that view as an argument with God. Like many other psalmists, the writer thinks of Sheol as the common gathering-place of the departed, a dim region where they live a poor shadowy life, inactive, joyless, and all but godless, inasmuch as praise, fellowship, and service with Him have ceased. That view is equally compatible with the belief in a resurrection, and the denial of it, for it assumes continued individual consciousness. It is the prevailing tone in the Psalter, and in Job and Ecclesiastes. But in some Psalms which embody the highest rapture of inward and musical devotion the sense of present union with God bears up the Psalmist into the sunlight of the assurance that against such a union death can have no power, and we see the hope of immortality in the very act of dawning on the devout soul. May we not say that the subjective experience of the reality of communion with God now is still the path by which the certainty of its perpetuity in a future life is reached? The objective proof in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is verified by this experience. The psalmists had not the former, but, having the latter, they attained to at all events occasional confidence in a blessed life beyond. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A plea for continued life.*—1. Concerning death, consider first, that there is a necessity of DEATH laid upon all flesh, wise men and fools, king and prophet, &c., neither the grandeur of the king nor holiness of the prophet can exempt them from death. 2. Next, that it interrupts the service and praise of God, as it destroys man's nature, albeit it interrupteth it only for a time, and in a part; the soul in the meantime praising God under the altar, till that both soul and body meet together and praise Him world without end. 3. That it is lawful to crave the continuance of our life, to the end that we may praise God. Would we desire the continuance of our life, that we may continue in sin? God forbid. Likewise we may desire death, not for being weary of temporal pain, or fear of shame; but with the apostle, that we may be dissolved and be with Christ, and be freed of the burthen of sin by our death, yet in both our desires let us submit ourselves to the good

pleasure of God, and say with our Saviour, Thy will be done, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. 4. We see in his sickness he seeks the continuation of his life at God's hands, who hath the issues of death in His will, thereby teaching us, neither with Asa to put our trust in the physicians, neither with Ahaziah to go ask counsel at Beelzebub; but with good Hezekiah turn to the wall, and with David here beg the prorogation of our lives from God. 5. Observe the difference between the godly and the wicked, in their contrary desires of the continuation of their lives: for the wicked, being tied to the bed of sickness, crave longer life, to the end they may enjoy their riches longer, and use, or rather abuse them; in the meantime never conceiving or nourishing an hope of celestial good things. But the godly, that they may record fruitfully the praises of God in the congregation of the righteous; besides, the fear of death in the reprobate, is because they see by it an end put to all their earthly felicities. (*A. Symson, B.D.*)

**Vers. 6, 7. I am weary with my groaning.**—*The penitent's sorrow*:—The penitent here expresses the effects which his sorrow had upon him in its outward manifestations. His eye was consumed because of grief, and he was weary with his groaning. An impression now seems generally to prevail that outward manifestations of feeling in matters of religion, instead of being proofs that the feeling is sound, are rather proofs that it is otherwise. Certainly, in themselves they are no unequivocal evidence of sincere and deep feeling; and in assemblies of God's people it is better in general that they should be repressed than indulged in. But where such feelings exist they must in some way or other be expressed: "I am weary with my crying," says the Psalmist; "my throat is dried; mine eyes fail, when they wait for my God. They mourn by reason of affliction. I have stretched out my hands daily unto Thee. Tears have been my meat day and night." And we can see no reason in the nature of things why such strong feelings of grief should be absent in religion. Surely, if the prospect of losing an earthly friend—a husband or a brother—causes the eye to run down with tears, the breast to heave and be convulsed with sobs, and the heart to be poured out like water before God—the prospect of losing eternal life may be no less overpowering. Assuredly, if a fall from riches to poverty, from circumstances of comfort to a condition of wretchedness, has shaken men of firm nerves—the prospect of an eternity spent in inconceivable misery, with the worm that dieth not, and in the fire that is not quenched, may appal the stoutest heart. We should therefore be surprised to meet with one who had passed from death to life through the terrors of the law, and yet was wholly a stranger to such feelings. We should regard him as a man of more than mortal mould. But let us observe, that true grief is unobtrusive. It seeks retirement. It is in the night that the Psalmist makes his bed to swim. He speaks not of his tears shed in the assemblies of God's people. The great question is, What are your feelings towards Him in private? Can the watches of the night bear witness to your meditating on His death and atoning sacrifice, and of your vows to be His, and His alone? Such was the Psalmist's experience; and light arose on his darkness. The day-spring of hope and gladness broke forth on him. Suddenly he changes the notes of woe for those of exultation, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed. Let them return and be ashamed suddenly." (*G. Innes.*)

**I water my couch with my tears.**—*David's sorrow*:—These strong expressions imply a sorrow so deep, unusual, and excessive as to provoke the inquiry, what could possibly occasion and justify them? From vers. 7–10 we conclude that the sufferer is brought into great and grievous peril by the arts of malicious enemies. But we may better seek the origin of his distress in influences of a more inward and spiritual character. While our affairs are prosperous, nothing is so common as a condition of spiritual heedlessness and self-satisfaction. Let God make a breach upon us, so that suddenly riches depart and enemies rejoice and friends begin to look cold, and then not uncommonly our conscience awakes from its long slumber and brings against us grievous accusations. The feeling that he is suffering God's rebuke, smarting under God's correction, is at once a comfort and a grief to the Psalmist: a comfort when he remembered the loving wisdom that corrected him; a grief when he called to mind the sinful ingratitude that needed correction. How can we wonder at the depth and extent of his grief? It is by the depth and reality, yea, the passion and abandon with which he utters the profoundest feelings of the pious heart, that David has moved so mightily the soul and spirit of the world. It is



impossible to withhold our deep respect from the stoic, seeing that his endurance of the ills of life implies a control and self-denial almost, if not altogether, sublime. If sorrow, when viewed in relation to its uses, is a good, how can we best apply it to those uses? By acknowledging its existence. Its right to exist, as long as there is sin in our hearts or suffering in the world. Sorrow is but the normal expression of a holy sensibility when excited by the contemplation of suffering or sin; and it is not therefore sorrow in itself, but only the excess and selfishness of it, that is to be restricted and overcome. (*J. Moorhouse, M.A.*) *Repentance in time will be remembered when repentance is impossible*:—Oh, let my remembering Thee in life supply the place of my forgetting Thee in death; and when I lie in my grave senseless and silent, be pleased to remember how I have lain in my bed sighing and weeping. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *Mourning for sin*:—First, he sighed and sobbed for his sin, and now he mourneth for the same. Look whereunto our follies tend! The pleasures of sin ever end in displeasure, for which either we must of necessity mourn in this life, or eternally in the life to come. The measure of his mourning is expressed by the washing and swimming of his bed with tears, which indeed is an hyperbolic speech, and doth express unto the vehemency and greatness of his grief, and that he did not esteem light of his sin, yea, I may affirm never had man greater displeasure for so short a pleasure as had David: neither was he in worse case with God, but rather the multitude of his tears were as many seals of God's favour towards him, and of the remission of his sins: showers be better than dews, yet it is sufficient if God at least hath bedewed our hearts, and hath given us some signs of a penitent heart: if we have not rivers of waters to pour forth with David, neither fountains flowing with Mary Magdalene, nor as Jeremiah, desire to have a fountain in our head to weep day and night, nor with Peter weep bitterly, yet if we lament that we cannot lament; and mourn that we cannot mourn; yea, if we have the smallest sobes of sorrow and tears of compunction, if they be true and not counterfeit, they will make us acceptable to God: for as the woman with the bloody issue that touched the hem of Christ's garment was no less welcome to Christ than Thomas, who put his fingers in the print of the nails, so God looketh not at the quantity, but the sincerity of our repentance. "My bed." The place of his sin is the place of his repentance, and so it should be, yea, when we behold the place where we have offended we should be pricked in the heart, and there again crave Him pardon. Sanctify by tears every place which ye have polluted by sin. "Every night." So, one hour's sin may bring many nights' pain, and it may be done in one hour which cannot be amended in our life. Learn, therefore, in time to be careful, and fall not into that ditch, out of which hardly can ye be freed. How easy is it for a man to fall into a pit, but with what difficulty is he delivered therefrom! As the night is secret, so should the work of thy repentance be; repent thou secretly, that the Lord may reward thee openly. Mark here that repentance should be constant, not one night, but every night. It is not seemly to a king to weep for his own private calamities, lest he might seem to be cast down from his courage; but nothing more royal than to mourn for the offence committed against the King of kings. Finally, mark what force tears have with God, that they can blot out the multitude of iniquities: be true and not counterfeit, they will make us acceptable to God. God looketh not on the quantity, but the sincerity of our repentance. (*A. Symson, B.D.*) *The righteous man's assault by his enemies*:—The pirates, seeing an empty bark, pass by it; but if she be loaded with precious wares, then they will assault her. So, if a man have no grace within him, Satan passeth by him, as not a convenient prey for him, but being loaded with graces, as the love of God, his fear, and such other spiritual virtues, let him be persuaded that according as he knows what stuff is in him, so will he not fail to rob him of them, if in any case he may. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.**—*A change from sorrow to hope*:—I. GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MERCY. The expressions of the Psalm indicate sorrow of no ordinary kind. Much of this sorrow caused by a sense of the indignation of God against sin (ver. 1). What he pleads for is the pardon of sin, the restoration of the light of the Divine countenance. His plea is God's mercy and God's glory. II. HOLY DETERMINATION TO FORSAKE SIN. "Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Those who have experienced God's pardoning mercy will never be content to continue in sin. III. HUMBLE CONFIDENCE. The Lord will receive my prayer. When under the pressure of different causes of sorrow the believer may take confidence from former deliverances. (*J. D. Lane, M.A.*)

*Sorrow and deliverance*.—The earlier verses of this Psalm are a wail, but it ends in song. It is like a day of rain which clears at evening. I. THE ELEMENTS OF THE PSALMIST'S SORROW (1-7). There was the pressure of Divine displeasure on account of sin (1, 2), combined with soul-anguish (3, 4), perhaps accompanied with sickness, bringing nigh unto death (4, 5), whilst enemies add their hate (6, 7). II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE PSALMIST'S DELIVERANCE (8-10). The prayer is no sooner uttered than answered. The consciousness of having been heard steals over the weary soul like a glint of light on to a bed in the hospital ward. Weeping has a voice for the ear of God. The Revised Version reads the imprecations of verse 10 as future tenses—"they shall be ashamed and turn back." When God returns, our enemies turn back. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Sin pleasant to begin with, but painful to end with*.—The work of sin seems pleasant and gainful; but in the end ye shall find it both unpleasant and painful when you get your wages payed you from your master, the devil, you shall know the truth of the saying of the apostle, "the reward of sin is death." (*A. Symson, B.D.*) *Workers of iniquity*.—Let us refuse, therefore, to work any longer task unto Satan, and betake us to a better Master and better service, and work in the Lord's vineyard. (*Ibid.*) *The voice of weeping*.—As David's prayers were not dumb, but had a voice, so they are not dry but full of tears: those sappy prayers be acceptable to God, which proceed not from a barren and dry heart, but from a heart well watered with the clouds of heaven, hearts planted at the Rivers of waters which we should all pray for. Think ye not that a mother will discern the voice, but much more the weeping of her own child, and the ewe discern the bleating of her own lamb among a thousand; and will not God regard the prayer of His own child being in affliction? (*Ibid.*)

**Ver. 10. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed.**—*The tolerance and intolerance of the gospel*.—A difficulty is often felt in reading or repeating these imprecations. These denunciations are appalling, withering. Are they not essentially personal, the breathing of a Jewish spirit of revenge, and in no sense Christian and universal? 1. I can find no difficulty in granting that the Old Testament spirit was a harder and a sterner spirit than that of the New. The emblem of the New Testament is the cross, which signifies passive endurance. The emblem of the Old Testament is the sword. As the Spirit of God freely uses individual thought, style and expression, overruling them so as to bring out His own higher meaning, I should not be surprised to find occasional phrases of a fiercer and an angrier complexion than any which occur in the New Testament, and which I should interpret with a different signification from that which their utterer designed. We need not consider these imprecatory Psalms as the utterance of David's longing for personal revenge. It is very singular that each of the Psalms in which the strongest imprecatory passages are found contains also gentle undertones, breathings of beneficent love. 2. When under the old covenant, earthly prosperity was the portion of the wicked, and earthly adversity of the pious, the whole moral government of God seemed to be veiled in clouds and darkness. Now, when all seems troubled, we can look up and behold by faith the glory that shall be revealed. "God is patient because He is eternal." Man is impatient when he is not assured of his immortality. 3. We must interpret every book by the mind of the author. If so, we must apply this to the Bible and to the Psalms. The real author is the Holy Spirit. "The prophet seems to speak as if in prayer—when he sees that which will certainly come—showing that the known counsel of God, which He has firmly and immutably fixed, should not displease us." Conceive a created spirit enlarged so as to embrace the will of God in relation to all the children of men—a spirit looking from the margin of an eternal world upon the petty histories of the past, purified from personal hatred, partiality, and prejudice, measuring all things by the counsels of God, such a spirit could say without a taint of personal revenge, "let all mine enemies be ashamed." Turn to two passages of the New Testament (Luke ix. 49, and sequel). We think of St. John as a man of angelic, or at least of feminine, gentleness. But in his nature, as in the blue sky of his native Galilee, there were sudden storms and fierce lightning flashes. As yet the brothers knew not Jesus thoroughly. They would build up by force the kingdom whose walls are cemented, not by "blood and iron," but by love. Such is the spirit of intolerance, which would in one age offer to God the hideous thing called by a fearful profanation an *auto-da-fé*; which in another would rivet the chains of penal laws upon a population; in another, with the cant of toleration upon its lips, stamp out an unpopular minority by rubrics and definitions. Is there any intolerance in the gospel? For answer see 2 John ver 10.

To deny that Jesus was the God-Man was to question His legitimacy and impugn His truth. Pagan toleration has been invidiously compared with Christian intolerance. But pagan toleration is a conclusion drawn from the false premises that all religions are about equally true ! while Christian persecution is a conclusion falsely drawn from the true principle of the exclusiveness of true religion. Commend the spirit of tolerance to all whom our Church tolerates. Amidst much that is depressing there is one happy sign of our times. There are tokens that Churches sundered hitherto are yearning to be one. A day is coming, even on the earth, when the inward unity of Christ's redeemed shall manifest itself outwardly ; when the prayer of our High-Priest shall be fulfilled, " that they all may be one." (*W. Alexander, D.D.*)

## PSALM VII.

**VERS. 1-17. O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust.**—*An appeal from the slandered.*—I. THE APPEAL (vers. 1, 2, 6). A petition for freedom and deliverance from his persecutors, in which he desires God to be attentive to him, because of the relation between them, and because he trusted in Him : and he also desires God to be benevolent, because he was in danger of death, having many enemies. II. HIS REASONS. He makes protestation of his innocency, and appeals to God's justice. He wants God to do justice both to him and to the wicked. The close of the Psalm is a doxology,—thanks that a true, just, and merciful God would judge for the righteous, save those who are true of heart, establish the just, and take revenge upon the wicked ; for this, says David, " I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness." (*William Nicholson, D.D.*) *David and his enemies.*—This Psalm consisteth principally of three parts. In the first part he prayeth for deliverance from his enemies, setting out his innocence and upright dealing toward them (vers. 1-5). In the second he prayeth against his enemies, declaring what good shall come to his children by the overthrow of the wicked (vers. 6-10). In the third he pronounceth God's judgment against the ungodly, which, being once manifested, he promises to yield hearty thanks unto the Lord (vers. 11-17). Learn that trust and confidence in God is always necessary to them that pray to Him ; for otherwise all our supplications are but lip-labour, and lost. Also, we learn to pray for deliverance from our persecutors, or else we might justly be accounted betrayers of ourselves. Many of God's children may stand upon their innocency to men-ward, and say in their measure—which of you can convict me of sin, but not before God. We may sometimes pray against some enemies of the Church, but we should make God's promises (general or particular) the ground of our prayers. When men will not judge rightly we may by prayer refer our causes to Him who hath no respect of persons. Vers. 12, 13 declare what mischievous minds the wicked carry toward the godly, and what means they will work to accomplish their naughtiness ; and that should teach us wisdom and circumspection, that we fall not into their nets. (*Thomas Wilcocks.*) *The ferocity of persecutors.*—It is reported of tigers that they enter into a rage on the scent of fragrant spices : so do ungodly men at the blessed savour of godliness. I have read of some barbarous nations, who when the sun shines hot upon them, they shoot up their arrows against it : so do wicked men at the light and heat of godliness. There is a natural antipathy between the spirits of godly men and the wicked (Gen. iii. 15). (*Jeremiah Burroughs.*) *Exemplary conduct under social trial.*—David's conduct indicates three things. I. EARNEST APPLICATION. In the midst of his trial he looks to heaven. In his supplication, see—1. A strong confidence in God as ever accessible ; equal to all emergencies ; large enough to receive all sufferers ; immutable amidst the revolution of ages. 2. A terrible sense of danger. " Lest he tear my soul like a lion." 3. A deep consciousness of innocence. " If there be iniquity in my hands." 4. An earnest invocation for help. " Arise, O Lord, lift up Thyself." His ideas of God throughout this Psalm are very anthropomorphic. In this invocation he has respect for three things—(1) The spiritual good of his country ; (2) the administrative justice of God ; (3) the universal extension of wickedness. II. DEVOUT MEDITATIONS (vers. 10-16). 1. On the character of God ; as a friend of the just ; an enemy of the wicked, whose opposition is constant, terrible, and avoidable. 2. On the condition of sinners. He regards his position as (1) painfully laborious ; (2) abortively laborious ; (3) self-ruinously laborious.



III. REVERENT ADORATION. Note—1. The character in which he worships the Almighty. As righteous and as supreme. 2. The spirit with which he worships the Almighty. "I will sing praise." Song is the language of happiness. True worship is happiness. All happy spirits worship, and worship is song. (*Homilist.*) *Turning to God in time of need*:—I. PRAYER (1, 2). If David desired deliverance from his foes, how much more do we need deliverance from our arch-enemy (1 Pet. v. 8, 9). II. PROTESTATION (3-5). (1 Sam. xxiv., xxvi.). So far had he been from the offence they charged him with. III. AN APPEAL (6-9). By a bold metaphor he attributes the success of his foes to some temporary abdication on God's part of His throne, and he entreats Him to reassume His throne and give His decisions, as Eastern judges are wont to do, in the midst of the people standing around. IV. PREDICTION (10-16). Evil recoils like a boomerang on those who set it in motion. Ralph the Rover perished at the Inchcape Rock. The huntsman at even-tide falls into the pit prepared in the morning for his prey. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Trust in God*:—I. THE CONDITIONS OF TRUST IN GOD. 1. We must lay to heart the glorious truth of the everlasting love of God towards us, and realise that He is our reconciled Father in Christ. 2. We must ever seek to do His will. We cannot "rest in the calm sun-glow of His face" if we are not earnestly seeking to do the things that please Him. 3. We must not trust in ourselves. The pride of the human heart is great, hence we are unwilling to confess our inability to keep God's commandments. 4. We must not trust in others. Asa's end a warning against trusting in an arm of flesh (2 Chron. xvi. 12, 13). II. WE OUGHT TO TRUST IN GOD. 1. In times of loneliness and depression (John xvi. 32; Psa. lvi. 3). 2. Times of danger, difficulty, and temptation. God is our refuge (Psa. lvii. 1); our guide (Psa. xlviii. 14); God is faithful (1 Cor. x. 13). III. THE RESULT OF TRUST IN GOD. 1. Blessedness (lxxxiv. 12). 2. Perfect peace (Isa. xxvi. 3). (*J. P. Wright.*)

Ver. 2. *While there is none to deliver.*—*Times when there must be a God*:—Why pray so loudly, clearly, and distinctly? Because the enemy is mighty, and he may "tear my soul like a lion . . . while there is none to deliver." If it be a question between man and man, woe betide the weak! If the great battles of human existence are to be measured by the strength of the contending parties, virtue will be thrown down, discrowned, destroyed. But there are times when there must be a God: controversy would be intolerable, doubt would be out of place—not blasphemy against heaven, but blasphemy against the agonised heart. In these dark times we may be said to create a God. Judge these questions in your high moods; there is no intellectual ladder that you can set up against this mystery, and by which you can climb your way into the presence of the throne: the heart can fly all the distance, counting the separate constellations nothing in the exercise of its infinite strength, created by infinite trust. What we have lost in all these matters may be described as the Divine fire. We have thought to beat cold iron into shape. Iron will only obey the hammer and the hand when fire has undertaken to do the intermediate work; it is when the soul is on fire that we have no doubt about God. When we are prosperous, too highly indulged, even sated with luxury and plenty, we play the agnostic, the atheist, the speculative thinker; but when circumstances change, when the floor gives way, when the earth rocks, when the sun sinks, as if in mortal fear, and shuts out the day; when the child dies, and when all nature seems to be set in array against the processes of life—then the real man within us will talk. When agony is stinging the soul, and darkness is accumulating itself upon the life like a burden, then let man say whether he is imbecile, whether he is unworthy of the related condition of things, and of the sovereignty which over-rules and guides and crowns them all. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 3-5. *O Lord my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands.*—*The appeal of conscious integrity*:—When near his end Mahomet made an effort to obtain himself the peace and pardon of the living before presenting himself before his Judge. Sustained beneath the arms by his two cherished disciples, Abubeker and Ali, he trailed himself along to the pulpit of the mosque, and said, with a feeble voice, "Mussulmans! if I have ever maltreated any among you, let him now come and strike me in turn. If I have offended any of you by word, let him return insult for insult. If I have taken from any his property, let him take all I possess upon the earth. And these are not vain words; let no one, in doing himself justice, apprehend my resentment. Resentment and anger are not in my character." A man dared to step from the crowd and claim of him a concealed

debt. "Help thyself," said the prophet; "it is better to blush in this life before men, for one's injustice, than to blush in the other world before God." (*Lamartine's Turkey.*)

**Ver. 6. Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger: lift up Thyself because of the rage of mine enemies.**—*The first of the imprecatory Psalms*:—Comminations are present in vers. 11–17, and imprecations upon the writer himself (under certain contingencies) in ver. 5. **I. THE PSALM IS NOT VINDICTIVE.** 1. It is certainly David's composition, and by his twice sparing Saul we know this was not his character. Cush the Benjamite was some follower of Saul who had plotted against David. It is probable that in 1 Sam. xxiv. we have the historic setting of the Psalm. The points of contact between the two are many. 2. And Cush was flagrantly an evil-doer (vers. 2, 3, 4, 14, 15). Hence these denunciations are uttered. **II. SEE WHAT HE PRAYS FOR.** It is simply that God will awake. **III. WHAT HE PREDICTS.** That the Lord will whet His sword, &c. Neither in prayer nor prediction is there any disproportion between the sin and its punishment. It is less than what God had Himself said He would do (Deut. xxxii. 23, 42). **IV. WHY HE THUS DENOUNCES.** Not because although he had spared his enemy, yet in his heart he was thirsting for revenge. If he had wanted revenge he could have taken it. But—1. From the instinct of self-preservation. 2. Desire for the repression of crime. 3. For the glory of God. We deny, therefore, that the Psalm is vindictive. (*Joseph Hammond.*)

**Ver. 7. For their sakes, therefore, return Thou on high.**—*David's strong language*:—David had no difficulty in invoking a tremendous punishment upon his enemies. But the language must be judged by the times in which it was employed. Not only so, but every man has his own language. In a sense there is a private and individual tongue. You must know the speaker before you can understand the speech. The man explains the mystery that is round about him. David's language was very strong; but David was a poet, and a Hebrew poet, a poet of poets. All the poetry that had gone before him was but as a pedestal, on which he stood to lift himself and his art into a nobler elevation. We must not, therefore, judge David's language, especially when it is imprecatory, with our critical notions of propriety and measure. No other terms would have expressed his then feeling. Were he with us now, none would be so sweet in song, none so tender in prayer. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 8. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.**—*Integrity and peace*:—A truly noble confidence! and yet many of our time would call the language very dangerous, if it were spoken by any but one of the Scripture saints. Some, on the other hand, charge it as a fault in our doctrine of salvation by grace, that it lets down even the standards of our morality itself; because it is a part of our merit, under grace, to have no merit. Let us see if we can find the true place for integrity under the Christian salvation by noting—I. **HOW THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK OF INTEGRITY.** The text cited does not stand alone. David says again, "Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity." Good men are called "upright," "just," "righteous," and "right." It is even declared that they "shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness." The Christian disciples of the New Testament dare to say that they have a conscience void of offence. They exhort others to walk so as they have them for examples. Making the strongest confessions of ill-desert, and resting their salvation on the justifying grace of God, they are still able to be free in professing their own conscious integrity in their discipleship. The explanation is not difficult if we consider—II. **WHAT INTEGRITY MEANS.** As an integer is a whole, in distinction from a fraction, which is only a part, so a man of integrity is a man whose aim in the right is a whole aim, in distinction from one whose aim is divided, partial, or unstable. It does not mean that he has never been a sinner, or that he is not now, but simply that the intent of his soul is to do and be wholly right with God and man. Distinguish between commercial integrity and the higher integrity of religion. What does it signify that a man gives men their due, and will not give God His? God is a person as truly as men are, more closely related to us, a better friend, one who has claims of right more sacred. Does it entitle one to the name of a just man that he is honest with men of one colour and not with those of another? What, then, shall we think of mere commercial integrity taken by itself? Real

integrity, ready to do right to God as to men, to men as to God, must be the condition of Christian character itself. Let us inquire—III. IN WHAT MANNER? If Christ saves men, not by their merit, or on terms of justice or reward, but by purely gratuitous favour, what place have we for insisting on the need of integrity at all? It seems to be the comfort of what some call their piety, that God is going to dispense with all merit in them, which they take to mean all sound reality of character,—all exactness of principle and conduct. Integrity is wholeness of aim or intent; but mere intent does not make a character. Yet it is just that by which all evil will be vanquished, under Christ and by grace, because it puts a man at the very gate of faith, where all God's helps are waiting for Him. His new and better aim is his way of coming into the righteousness of God. The Scripture conditions all help on the integrity of the soul. "Ye shall seek and find Me, if ye search for Me with all your heart." Let us note, in conclusion—1. What it is that gives such peace and loftiness of bearing to the life of a truly righteous man. Storms of detraction and malignant conspiracies against his character may drive their clouds about Him, but he sits above with his God, and they all sail under. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effects of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." Here, too—2. Is the ground of all failures, and all highest successes in the Christian life. Only to be an honest man, in this genuinely Christian sense, signifies a great deal more than most of us ever conceive. Little do we realise how honest a man must be to pray, how heartily, simply, totally he must mean what he prays for. Perhaps he prays much, and has it for a continual wonder that God does not answer his prayers. Perhaps he has conceived a higher standing in religion, and has tried long to reach it, and finds it not. Strange as it may seem, here is the root of the difficulty—that his projected attainments are clear ahead of his integrity. Some traitor is hid in his soul's chambers, that is kept there, and carefully fed. Success is the fixed destiny of any soul that has once reached the point of whole intent. I note—3. A very important deduction, namely,—that every man who comes into a state of right intent will forthwith also be a Christian. Whoever is willing to be carried just where it will carry him, cost him what it may, in that man the spirit of all sin is broken, and his mind is in a state to lay hold of Christ and be laid hold of by Him. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him." God is on the look-out always for an honest man—him to help and with him, and for him, to be strong. And if there be one, God will not miss him; for His desiring, all-searching eyes are running the world through always to find him. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) *Self-respect and self-righteousness*:—Is this speech self-righteous? If so it is a bad speech; for self-righteousness is a bad temper of mind; few are worse. But there is another temper of mind which looks like it at first, but is not so, and which is right in its way. I mean the temper of Job when his friends tried to make him out a bad man. He declared he would tell no lies about himself. "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. I have, on the whole, tried to be a good man, and I will not make myself out a bad one." St. John said, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I. BUT WE MAY MISUSE THAT DOCTRINE. Many do. 1. Some people try to confess as many sins as possible. They do not go and commit them, but they fancy themselves guilty of them. This is all too common. It is ruinous oftentimes to the body; I have seen people kill their own bodies and die early by this folly. And they kill their souls too, and enter into strong delusions and believe lies. And yet one pities them more than we can be angry with them, and all the more because they are generally the most innocent, and who have least to confess. We should pray for them. 2. But there is a worse misuse of St. John's doctrine than this. A man may be proud of calling himself a miserable sinner, and of confessing his sins. But if he really knew the misery of sin he would not talk so much about it. His talk is only another way of saying, "I am a better man than you. I confess my sins, and you do not." II. BUT WHAT IS THE RIGHT USE OF THE DOCTRINE? If you refuse, like Job, to own yourself guilty of what you know you are not guilty of, such a man will tell you that you are ignorant of the first principles of the gospel. You are building integrity and morality. Now, he is partly right, and so are you. St. Paul will help us, for he said, "I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord." Now, no man was ever less self-righteous than Paul, and yet he says, "I know nothing against myself." Then, here is the rule. If you have done wrong, confess that; if you



have done right, be not afraid to say you have. And to keep up self-respect, go on trying to do right. Wrong no man, least of all, a woman. But, mind, your right-doing will not justify you, for we all have sinned. III. REMEMBER THE LORD WILL JUDGE YOU. Be glad of this, as David was, for he knew that the Lord would bring him out of his sin. You must not think of God as hard, or you will fret and not fight. But if you believe Him good you will fight and not fret. And you will be able to leave yourself in His hands. (*Charles Kingsley.*)

Vers. 9-16. **Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end.**—*The self-destroying power of wickedness*:—The accents require ver. 9 to be rendered, “Let wickedness make an end of the wicked,” but that introduces an irrelevant thought of the suicidal nature of evil. It may be significant that the Psalmist’s prayer is not for the destruction of the wicked, but of their wickedness. Such annihilation of evil is the great end of God’s judgment, and its consequence will be the establishment of the righteous. Again, the prayer strengthens itself by the thought of God as righteous, and as trying the hearts and reins (the seat of feeling). In the presence of rampant, and all but triumphant evil, a man needs to feed hopes of its overthrow, that would else seem vainest dreams, by gazing on the righteousness and searching power of God. . . . The last section is a vision of the judgment prayed for, and may be supposed to be addressed to the enemy. If so, the hunted man towers above them, and becomes a rebuker. The character of God underlies the fact of judgment, as it had encouraged the prayer for it. What he had said to himself when his head drooped he now, as a prophet, peals out to men as making retribution sure: “God is a righteous judge, yea, a God that hath indignation every day.” The absence of an object specified for the indignation makes its inevitable flow wherever there is evil the more vividly certain. If He is such, then of course follows the destruction of every one who turns not. Retribution is set forth with solemn vigour under four figures. 1. God is as an armed enemy sharpening His sword in preparation for action, a work of time which in the Hebrew is represented as in process, and bending His bow, which is represented as a completed act. Another second and the arrow will whizz. So the stern picture is drawn of God as in the moment before the outburst of His punitive energy—the sword sharpened, the bow bent, the arrows fitted, the burning stuff being smeared on their tips. What will happen when all this preparation blazes into action? 2. Ver. 14: A figure of the automatic action of evil in bringing punishment. It is the Old Testament version of “Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.” The evil-doer is boldly represented as “travailing with iniquity,” and that metaphor is broken up into two parts, “He hath conceived mischief,” and “He hath brought forth falsehood.” The “falsehood,” which is the thing actually produced, is so called, not because it deceives others, but because it mocks its producer with false hopes, and never fulfils his purposes. This is but the highly metaphorical way of saying that a sinner never does what he means to do, but that the end of all his plans is disappointment. The law of the universe condemns him to feed on ashes, and to make and trust in lies. 3. The idea in “falsehood,” namely, the failure of evil to accomplish its doer’s purpose. Crafty attempts to trap others have an ugly habit of snaring the contriver. The irony of fortune tumbles the hunter into the pitfall dug by him for his prey. 4. Ver. 16: The incidence of his evil on the evil-doer as being certain as the fall of a stone thrown straight up, which will infallibly come back in the line of its ascent. Retribution is as sure as gravitation, especially if there is an Unseen Hand above, which adds impetus and direction to the falling weight. All these metaphors, dealing with the “natural” consequences of evil, are adduced as guarantees of God’s judgment, whence it is clear both that the Psalmist is thinking not of some final future judgment, but of the continuous one of daily providence, and that he made no sharp line of demarcation between the supernatural and the natural. The qualities of things and the play of natural events are God’s working. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A prayer for the ending of wickedness*:—I. THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED. 1. It is the genuine fruit of a depraved nature. 2. It displays itself in various forms. 3. It presses into its service the whole man. 4. It has abounded in all ages of the world. II. WHEN MAY THIS WICKEDNESS COME TO AN END? The end of a thing is its termination. 1. It comes to an end partially in the individual conversion of sinners to God. 2. It will come to an end generally by the conversion of the world to God. III. THIS IS A MOST DESIRABLE OBJECT. 1. On God’s account. 2. On our own account.

3. On account of those who are the immediate subjects of this wickedness. VI. WHAT MEANS CAN BE ADOPTED TO PUT AN END TO IT? 1. Give no countenance to wickedness. 2. Warn the wicked of their danger. 3. Pray that their wickedness may come to an end. Wrestle with God in their behalf. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Prayer for the termination of sin:*—Our text is a prayer, and teaches us—1. To pray against all sin; to pray it, if possible, out of the world.

2. To pray for all saints, for all good people. If we would be on the Lord's side in the day of inquiry, we must by our prayers act in concert with the just. I. WHAT WE ARE TO DESIRE AND PRAY FOR. 1. That wickedness may come to an end. That wicked principles may be exploded and abandoned. That wicked practices may be prevented and restrained; that though Balaam be still the same, yet he may not be suffered to curse Israel; though Sennacherib has still an inveterate rage against God, yet he may be made to feel that God has a hook in his nose and a bridle in his jaws. Thus let wickedness be ashamed and hide itself, and that it may not be propagated and spread so as to infect others. 2. That God would establish the just in their integrity and retain them in it, is their comfort and hope. In their undertaking against wickedness: that they may not be shaken by any discouragements they meet with. II. WHY THIS IS AND OUGHT TO BE THE DESIRE OF ALL GOOD PEOPLE. Because—1. Such have concern for the honour of God; and 2. They have tender love to the souls of men. 3. They have great value for the grace of God, for what it has done and is promised to do; and 4. They are hearty well-wishers to their native land. III. FOR APPLICATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID. 1. Let us address ourselves to God in prayer that He would further the reformation of manners in our land. Let ministers thus pray, and those who are engaged in the societies for reformation support their undertakings by their prayers. 2. And let us follow prayer with endeavour. You who are rich and of station in the world be favoured to appear in person to uphold this work. Your influence is a talent you must account for. Assure yourselves that the cause of religion and piety is the cause of God and must prevail. (*Matthew Henry.*) *For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.*—*The searching Divine test:*—The one thought of God's judgment seems to run through the Psalm.

To understand the Psalm aright we must refer it altogether to the assurance that God will ultimately clear those who are falsely accused of anything in this world, which they feel and know that they have never committed. Often evil does seem to prevail over good. In the end God will justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. This assurance may uphold faithful men in all times of difficulty, trial, and persecution. Oftentimes God brings it to pass upon wicked men that they perish by the very way and means they designed for the destruction of the righteous. It is not merely that God knows every way of all men; it is not merely that His eye readeth, as it does, the very thoughts and intents of every heart amongst us: it is that He *trieth* each separate thought and intent of that heart: He weighs every word; He marks every little variation and complexion of man's thoughts, and words, and works, and intents. He registers it all, because He will one day "judge the world in righteousness." To say to ourselves, "The righteous God trieth the very heart and reins," will make us think more of what we call "little" sins, and it will make us value more and more every greater or less opportunity of receiving grace or of doing good. It will make us also watch more carefully the springs and intents of our hearts. (*W. J. Stracey, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. *My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.*—*God, the shield-bearer of the upright:*—Lit.: God is my shield-bearer. Fig.: I hang my shield upon God. The idea is that of going to war, and having God as the carrier, the bearer, of our shield, so that before we can be struck down, God Himself must be wounded and overpowered. "My defence is of God." There are times when we need great defences. There arise in life crises, points of agony, when we can only be silent, having first said to God, "Undertake for me." There are times when it seems to us but a small thing, or a course quite natural, to claim all heaven as our defence. These are supreme moments. The bulk of life is commonplace, lived on an ordinary level, requiring the discharge of common duties. There are times when the whole heaven is no longer a defence, but an accusation. These are the terrible moments of life. Where, then, is man's defence? Let man in such moments look within; let him trace the course of his own spirit and action; and if he can find in that action reasons for self-condemnation, then let him be penitent and broken-hearted; let him find God through his tears. The tears must not be

selfish : no man must make an investment of his broken-heartedness. Repentance must be perfect, vital, sincere, all-inclusive. He does not repent who cries simply because the consequences are painful. Contrition has nothing to do with consequences. God may be both accuser and defender. He prefers the accusation with the reluctance of wounded love ; through the accusation He causes to shine the light of the prepared defence : His mercy endureth for ever. He is the defender of the sinner, when the offender falls down in contrition and self-examination. The Psalmist falls back upon the vital element of character. "Saveth the upright in heart." Is God, then, only the defender of the righteous, who have never sinned ? No such meaning is here. "The upright in heart" may not always be the upright in conduct. Men cannot go beyond conduct ; God goes into motive, purpose, secret thought. May there, then, be broken conduct and yet a heart truly upright before God ? There may be, and that is our hope. God does not look upon us as we are, but upon what we would be if we could. Where there is this integrity or uprightness of heart, all the rest will be well. When you have the upright heart all needful consistency will be guaranteed. A growing life is never a literally consistent one. Many a man is mechanically consistent who is spiritually self-contradictory. Do we want to be upright in heart ? There is but one gospel way. The grace of God alone can make the heart true and new and beautiful. We cannot give ourselves uprightness of heart. It is not in man to make himself clean. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The upright in heart*.—I. A CHARACTER DESCRIBED. The upright in heart. Now it includes inward principle as the wheel which puts the whole machine in action ; and outward conduct is the result of it. Take as example.—1. Nathaniel. He was a man whose outward character corresponded with the promptings of his heart. 2. Remember there may be uprightness of heart with many failings. God looks at the intents of the heart. Only they must be sincere. II. THE PRIVILEGE OF THIS CHARACTER. 1. God's defence. We see how God defends the tender plants from winter's cold and summer's heat. But yet more does He protect His children. For His love is deeper, stronger, and more lasting than that of a mother. 2. God's salvation. "God raiseth the upright in heart." But our salvation is in Christ, there is none out of Him. (*W. D. Howard.*)

Ver. 11. God is angry with the wicked every day.—*God's anger against the wicked*.—I. WHO ARE THE "WICKED" IN THE SCRIPTURE SENSE OF THE TERM ? The Bible divides all the human race into two classes only—the righteous and the wicked. Those are righteous who have true faith in Christ, whose spirit is consecrated to God, who live a heavenly life on earth, and who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their original selfishness is subdued and slain, and they live a new life through the ever-present grace of Christ Jesus. Right over against them in character are the wicked, who have not been renewed in heart ; who live in selfishness, under the dominion of appetite in some of its forms,—and it matters not in which, out of all possible forms, it may be, but self is the great and only ultimate end of their life. II. GOD IS ANGRY WITH THE WICKED. This is the testimony of God Himself. This truth is also taught by reason. If God were not opposed to the wicked, He would be wicked Himself for not opposing them. Sinners know that God is angry with them, and ought to be. Else, why are they afraid to die ? III. THE NATURE OF THIS ANGER. 1. It is not a malicious anger. God never has a disposition to do any wrong in any way to any being. 2. His anger is not passion in the sense in which men are wont to exhibit passion in anger. Reason for the time is displaced, and passion reigns. 3. God's anger cannot be in any sense a selfish anger ; for God is not selfish in the least degree. Positively, His anger against the wicked implies—(1) An entire disapprobation of their conduct and character. He loathes the wicked with infinite loathing. (2) He feels the strongest opposition of will to their character, as opposed to His own character. (3) Strong opposition of feeling against sinners. In our attempts to conceive of the mental faculties of the Divine mind, we are under a sort of necessity of reasoning analogically from our own minds. As we have intellect, sensibility, and will, so has God. From our own minds we infer not only what the faculties of the Divine mind are, but also the laws under which they act. (4) God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. The sin has no moral character apart from the sinner. It grieves and displeases God that a rational moral agent, under His government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. (5) The anger



of God against the wicked implies all that properly belongs to anger when it exists with good reason. IV. THE REASONS OF GOD'S ANGER. Causeless anger is always sinful. God never Himself violates His own laws—founded as they are in infinite right and justice. 1. Wicked men are entirely unreasonable. God has given them intelligence and conscience; but they act in opposition to both. God has given them a pure and good law, yet this they recklessly violate. We know that, by a fixed law of our being, nothing can be a greater temptation to anger than to see persons act unreasonably. So when God looks at the unreasonable conduct of sinners, He feels the strongest indignation and displeasure. 2. The course of the wicked is utterly ruinous. No thanks to the sinner if his influence does not ruin the whole world. By the very laws of mind, the sin of any one man tends to influence other men to sin, and they spread far and wide the dreadful contagion of his example. What influence can be more potent than that of example? 3. God is so good and sinners are so wicked, He cannot help being angry at them. Since, in His wisdom and knowledge, He knows more fully than they do the great evil of sin, by so much the more is He under obligation to be displeased with sin and angry at the sinner. V. THE DEGREE OF GOD'S ANGER AGAINST SIN. It ought to be equal to the degree of their wickedness, and must be if God is what He should be. We judge of men's guilt by their light, and by their capacity for governing themselves by light and reason. God's anger against sin is in proportion to the sinner's guilt, estimated in view of the light he enjoys and sins against. VI. THE DURATION OF GOD'S ANGER. It must continue as long as the wickedness itself continues. If they turn not, there can be no abatement, no cessation of His anger. VII. THE TERRIBLE CONDITION OF THE SINNER AGAINST WHOM GOD IS ANGRY. Look at the attributes of God. Think of the case of the sinner's exposing himself to the indignation of the great and dreadful God. Look at His natural attributes. Power. Omniscience. Look at His holiness, and His mercy. Such is His nature, and such His character, that you have nothing to hope, but everything to fear. His dreadful anger against you must be expressed. Remarks: 1. God is much more opposed to sinners than Satan is. 2. If God were not angry with sinners, He would not be worthy of confidence. 3. God's anger with sinners is not inconsistent with His happiness. 4. God's opposition to sinners is His glory. 5. Saints love God for His opposition to sinners, not excepting even His opposition to their own sins. This text is to be understood as it reads. Some have supposed that God is not really angry with sinners, but uses this language in accommodation to our understandings. This is an unwarrantable latitude of interpretation. In God there is a fixed eternal displeasure and opposition against all sinners because of their great guilt. 7. God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love—real compassionate love, the love of well-wishing and good-willing. 8. It is plain that sinners do not realise God's anger, though they know it. If they do both know and realise it, they manifest a degree of hardihood in iniquity which is dreadful. But the fact is, they keep the thought of God's anger from their minds. (*C. G. Finney.*) *God's anger with the wicked:*—Many think that God, in order to be perfectly benevolent, ought not to be angry at anything. But the idea of a Supreme Ruler, who would not be displeased whenever wrong is done, would be the most frightful idea that ever could pass through the minds of any creatures whatever. This is certain, the God of this Bible is a God that hateth iniquity. What is the anger of God that rests upon the head of a sinning man? It is not hatred. It is not revenge, which implies a sense of injury and a feeling of ill-will. It is not implacable offence. What is it? It is hatred of a bad action, with displeasure against him who does that action. You can separate the doer from the action, so far that while you hate the action you shall not hate him that does it. But you cannot separate the doer so far, that if the action is a hateful one, and you feel rightly, you can hate the action, and yet feel favour towards him that does it. God's displeasure against sin is the simple and inevitable result of God's purity and God's goodness, and is in itself the strict expression of justice. But it is a forbearing anger, and always ready to forgive. It is no dead sentiment that will be inactive always. What duty, then, does this truth devolve on you and me? Repent; and cease to do evil; and turn unto thy God, saying, "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." (*W. Arthur.*) *God angry with the wicked:*—Were any one of us to be completely in the power of some mysterious stranger, and did we know that we had done that which would arouse his anger, how anxious we should be to know his purposes towards us. But men do not feel like this in regard to God, against whom they have sinned and in whose power they know they are. They are careless and con-

fident as if all was well with them. But Scripture gives them no encouragement. Consider our text and think—I. OF WHAT THE ANGER OF GOD IS. Anger is only right where there is that which can properly arouse it. Human anger is, generally, only selfish, and therefore sinful. But the anger of God is only that indignation which benevolence itself must feel toward the enemies of all good. II. AND THIS ANGER IS ON THE WICKED EVERY DAY. 1. Scripture affirms this. 2. The holiness of God necessitates it. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness"; He, therefore, must have anger towards its opposite: else He would be as destitute of affections as a statue. Holiness is repugnance to all moral impurity and deformity. 3. The justice of God and the tendency of sin. For the justice of God is His moral perfection directed to uphold His moral government. It is in this character that He is "a jealous God." III. CONCLUSION. 1. How false and dangerous to deny the reality of the Divine anger. Many do. 2. The wicked cannot have God's favour while they continue in sin. 3. How changed the condition of the righteous. 4. How awful the situation of the stupid sinner. (*M. W. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. **If he turn not, He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.** *Turn or burn:*—So, then, God has a sword, and He will punish man on account of iniquity. This evil generation hath sought to take away from God the sword of His justice. Perhaps the Puritans insisted too much on the wrath of God, but our age seeks to forget that wrath altogether. I. WHAT IS THE TURNING HERE MEANT? 1. It is actual, not fictitious; not one that stops with vows and promises. 2. It must be entire. Many will give up many sins, but not all: there are certain darling lusts which they will keep and hold. Remember that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink a soul. 3. And it must be immediate. There must be no procrastination. "To-day if ye will hear His voice." 4. And hearty—no pretended repentance. 5. And perpetual: it must not be transitory or superficial. In old times when rich and generous monarchs came to their cities they made the fountains run with wine. But to-morrow it ran with water as before. It is hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance. Legal repentance is a fear of damning; evangelical, of sinning. And this is far deeper than the other: the man feels that only by sovereign grace can his sin be put away, that no mere course of holy living can blot it out. Christ alone can dig its grave. II. THE NECESSITY THAT GOD SHOULD WHET HIS SWORD AND PUNISH MEN IF THEY WILL NOT TURN. Richard Baxter used to say, "Sinner! turn or burn: it is thine only alternative." And it is so: for—1. God cannot suffer sin to go unpunished. How could He govern men if He had no justice? 2. The Scriptures are full of declarations of this truth. 3. All which conscience confirms. You may say you have no such belief. I did not say you had, but I say that your conscience tells you so. As John Bunyan said, Mr. Conscience had a very loud voice, and though Mr. Understanding shut himself up in a dark room, where he could not see, yet he used to thunder out so mightily in the streets that Mr. Understanding used to shake in his house through what Mr. Conscience said. But I am tired of this terrible work of proving that God must punish sin. However, I should like to act as if there were a hell, even if there is no such place; for as a poor and pious man once said to an unbeliever, "Sir, I like to have two strings to my bow. If there should be no hell, I shall be as well off as you will; but if there should, it will go hard with you." But why say "if"? You know there is. III. NOW WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF REPENTANCE? You cannot repent of yourself. But Christ is exalted "to give repentance and remission of sin." Then if you feel that you are a sinner, ask Him to give you repentance. Many a man says he cannot repent while he is repenting. Keep on with that till you feel you have repented, then believe and be saved. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Divine anger an everlasting principle:*—Polarity, as it is called, exhibits both attraction and repulsion, and at the same pole attraction and repulsion, and by the same law, at the same pole, attraction and repulsion. At the same pole the magnet attracts and repels. And Divine benevolence has polarity. At the same pole it attracts and repels. By the same law it attracts and repels. By the same eternal, Divine necessity it attracts and repels. With the same Divine force it attracts and repels. Its attraction is love, its repulsion is wrath; but wrath is love turned round, and both *wrath* and *love* are the opposing poles of that one attribute. Hence it is the more to be regretted, and the more to be lamented, that so many ministers of Christ, not to say members of the Church

of God, have wrong conceptions of the wrath of God. Watts was wrong when he made the Psalm to say of God—

“Whose anger is so slow to rise,  
So ready to abate.”

The fact is, God's anger never rises, and it never abates. It is always at flood tide, at the flood mark; and that is the mark of infinite perfection. It does not go up and down, like the impulsive, impetuous, and capricious passions of men. It is an everlasting principle, not a passion at all—an everlasting principle—eternal love of righteousness, eternal detestation of unrighteousness. (*A. F. Pierson.*)

Ver. 13. **He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors.**—*God's arrows*:—Mercy and love often lurk in the meanings of these Psalms, which on their surface seem, like Saul on the road to Damascus, to breathe threatenings and slaughter. David thought only of the arrows of God's judgments; the Christian loves to think of these arrows of conviction and of love which God hath often discharged against the persecutors of His Church, such as Saul was. See this in his conversion. The disciples awaited his coming to Damascus in fear and trembling. But God's arrow was ready against him, had been “ordained” long ago. It was of God, of Christ. For of Him it is said: “Thine arrows are very sharp; and the people shall be subdued unto Thee, even in the midst among the King's enemies.” Such were the Pharisees, of whom Saul was one. When Jesus appeared to Saul He spoke not of arrows, but of goads—the ox-goads, which when the oxen lash out against them only wound themselves the more. Conscience had been such a goad to Saul. The influence of Stephen's death; the calm patience of those whom he had cruelly persecuted—all this must have made him feel as every persecutor, down to the inquisitors of later days, must have felt, that he was doing the devil's work. Yet he hardened himself and kicked out against the goads of conscience and went on madly persecuting Jesus. But this arrow was too much for him; it was altogether too sharp. The great lesson, then, of our text is that no persecutor will be allowed to proceed too far. If the arrows of conviction will not serve, then God “will whet His sword.” As with Antiochus Epiphanes. Such an one most strikingly was that Julian the Apostate, who was perhaps more dangerous to the Church than any Nero or Decius, because he knew her weak points, and because he mingled so much craft with his violence. It was in very sooth an arrow—a Parthian arrow, shot at random in some paltry skirmish—which laid that persecutor low, for God had ordained it against him of old. He himself would seem to have been aware whence that arrow came, and who it was whom he had been so bitterly persecuting, for it is said that when he perceived his wound to be mortal, he threw some of his blood up into the air (after the manner of dying gladiators) and exclaimed, “Thou hast conquered, O Nazarene!” (*R. Winterbotham.*) *God's arrows not shot at random*:—It is said that God hath ordained His arrows against the persecutors; the word signifies such as burn in anger and malice against the godly; and the word translated “ordained,” signifies God hath wrought His arrows; He doth not shoot them at random, but He works them against the wicked. Illicius hath a story which may well be a commentary upon this text in both the parts of it. One Felix, Earl of Wartenburg, one of the captains of the Emperor Charles V., swore in the presence of divers at supper, that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans. Here was one that burned in malice, but behold how God works His arrows against him: that very night the hand of God so struck him, that he was strangled and choked in his own blood; so he rode not, but bathed himself, not up to the spurs, but up to the throat, not in the blood of the Lutherans, but in his own blood before he died. (*Jeremiah Burroughs.*)

Vers. 14–16. **Behold, he travaileth with iniquity.**—*The enemies of the Church*:—1. That all the labour of wicked men against the Church is but labour in vain in respect of their own intent and expectation. 2. That the labour of wicked men is turned clean contrary to their own intent and expectation. These things are set down in metaphor and in express speech. Doctrine: The wicked counsels and enterprises of the enemies of the Church are not only vain in respect of others, but mischievous against themselves. God scattereth the devices of the crafty, so as they cannot accomplish what they enterprise. The misery of the enemies of the Church may be seen in four particulars. 1. All their pain and labour is for their own destruction.



2. That they live in perpetual peril of destruction. 3. That unexpected destruction comes when they expect the sweet fruit of all their labour. 4. That the mischief plotted against the greatest enemies recoils upon themselves, as a gun overcharged and recoiling. There is little cause why God's people should envy the prosperity of their enemies, or study for revenge. They should rather pity them, and pray for them, so many as are curable, for their last dish will mar all the feast. Little do they know what they are doing. They are twisting a cord to hang themselves. They are digging a pit, but the earth falls on them, and smashes them to pieces. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *The saint's safety in evil times*:—These words express the conception, birth, carriage, and miscarriage of a plot against David. In which consider—I. WHAT HIS ENEMIES DID. This is likened to a bodily conception, for the mind hath such as well as the body. The seed of it was some wicked thought cast in by Satan, the understanding was the womb to conceive, the will to consent. From first to last, from the conception to the bringing forth, they intended the destruction of David, but brought forth their own ruin. 1. And how great was their sin? It was voluntary and with delight, and it was spiritual and artificial—there was much art and cunning in it: they were very diligent in it, for it was a curious web. Judas is awake when Peter is asleep. And, which is worst of all, they were so well pleased with the bent of their own brain that they travailed of it. The more the soul dwells on any sinful plot, the more estrangement there is from God. The more deliberate in sin, the more the soul is pleased with it. Many seek out the delight of sin before they act, as Esau pleased himself by thinking, “the day of mourning for his father would come, wherein he might be revenged of his brother.” 2. But by whom and against whom was this plotting? By children of the Church, not uncircumcised Philistines; and that opposition is the bitterest of all. 3. And it was against David, a man after God's own heart. Envy hath an ill eye. It cannot look on goodness without grief. And this plot was cunningly carried. First, they kill his good name, that so slander may make way for violence. Satan is a liar first, and then a murderer. See what David did. Innocency was his best apology. He saw God in the wrongs he suffered. We need not be ashamed to learn some things of our very enemies. If they be so set on evil, why not we on good? I am sure we serve a better Master. True love is full of inventions; it will be devising of good things. II. WHAT GOD DID. Now I come to their miscarriage. They brought forth a lie, God defeated them. 1. How this was done. By disappointing them. They fell into danger of their own contriving, and into the same danger that they plotted for another. Compare the history of Haman and Mordecai. Why does God do this? First, in regard to Himself. He will be known to be God only wise. Secondly, in regard of His tender care over His children, who are the apple of His eye. Another reason is, the virulence of the enemies whose fierceness turns to God's praise (Psa. ix. 16). And God's children will give Him no rest. They prevail on Him by importunity. 3. But it will be objected that wicked men do prevail over the children of God. Truly could say, “The gods show how much they esteem the Jewish nation, by suffering them so often to be conquered.” Where, then, is the bringing forth of a lie? I answer, when they do prevail it is but one part only, not the whole. Over men's lives, but not their spirits. A true Christian conquers when he is conquered. Our enemies shall do no more nor less than God wills: their mischievous attempts fail in the end; for did ever any harden themselves against God and prosper long? The greatest torment of the damned spirit is that God turns all his plots for the good of those he hates most. III. WHAT WE ALL SHOULD DO. We are bidden “behold.” 1. The subtlety, malice, and restless endeavour of the enemies of goodness, and their bootless enterprise, they bring forth a lie. 2. But especially the mercy of God to His children, and how He confounds their enemies. (*R. Sibbes.*)

Ver. 15. **He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.**—*Social sappers*:—There is much among men of the particular sin rebuked in this text. I. HOW THIS PIT-DIGGING MAY BE DONE. It may be done by attempting to lower a man's reputation. We are often guilty of talking in such a way that we “lower” people. The society papers live on this sort of thing. Scandal is a most prominent form of the pit-digging business. It may be done by sapping a man's business. We have a general idea of what is fair and unfair within the world of trade. Now, some men steadily set themselves to ruin their neighbour's business, thinking this essential to their own aggrandisement. You may do it by your capital, by your tongue, by your influence. Men sometimes seek to entice their

neighbours into plausible and ruinous speculations. It may be done by endangering a man's character. Men will knowingly and designingly ruin their brother; they "let them in" to some sin or other. They will do this for the sake of gain, for a companionship in guilt, and sometimes out of a mere delight in iniquity. Sometimes we dig a pit for others when we do not think of all that we are doing. We have no right to lay snares, nor to put an occasion of stumbling in our brother's way. If our brother shows a tendency to slide we must not grease his path.

II. CHARACTERISE THIS WORK OF PIT-DIGGING. 1. It is dark work; it has to be done secretly, under cover of night: to be done softly, to be wrapped up. Let us decline all that kind of work in which we should be ashamed for society to see us. The great motto of Positivism is, "Live without concealment." So live that you would not care if your house were glass. Let us decline all that work we should shrink from bringing under the eye of God. 2. It is dirty work, ignoble, base, disgraceful. Whatever aims to lower men is of this character. Such conduct involves only base qualities. Sometimes it is prompted by covetousness. Or it springs from envy or from revenge; or from mere levity. Pit-diggers may be well dressed, but their work is of a far dirtier kind than that of the delver in the earth. 3. It is dismal work. All the true work of life has a joy in it, but there is no brightness or blessing in letting people down. It is a joyless thing to be a grave-digger among living men: to dig graves for men's reputations. Lighthouse building is better than pit-sinking. Let our life be devoted to the uplifting of men. 4. It is degrading work. As soon as you begin to dig you stoop, and whatever progress you make you sink with your work. All true work resembles the work of the builder. If in conversation we talk down others, if that is our habit and pleasure, we talk ourselves down at the same time, whether we know it or not. As George Sand says, "Insults, harsh words, detractive utterances, kill morally those who give expression to them." You narrow and debase your own thought and feeling, you wrong your own soul. If the spirit of our life is sympathy, and if we find readily and praise readily whatever is good, beautiful, clever, successful in the work of our fellows, we are really nourishing and promoting our intellect in an eminent degree. And so in our business life. It was said to me concerning one of the richest men in Bradford, "He has made more gentlemen than any man in Bradford." That is the way, so to rise that you lift others up with you. The whole idea of the New Testament is, that a noble life is devoted to raising one's fellow-men. This was the grand task of the Master. He was constantly raising what was fallen. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

*The self-avenging power of sin.*—The man that travaileth with iniquity, who is big with thoughts and purposes of evil, shall experience, as the issue of his birth-throes, nothing but mischief and falsehood, misery and disappointment. Sin is a thing that recoils upon its perpetrator, and inflicts its heaviest blows upon the soul conceiving it, intending it, and giving it life and form. It was in accordance with this self-avenging power of sin that Saul was slain by the Philistines (1 Sam. xxxi. 2-4), whom he had designed to be slayers of David (1 Sam. xviii. 21, 25); that Haman was hanged upon the gallows he had erected for another (Esth. vii. 10); and that the Jews themselves were destroyed by the Romans, whose aid they had invoked and received to crucify their Messiah. This recoiling, self-avenging power of sin is conclusive proof that a holy, just, and living God is moving everywhere in nature, and in the affairs of men, to paralyse the arm of the evil-doer, and to make man feel in every blow that he inflicts upon truth and right, upon innocence and virtue, a counter-blow of overwhelming force. It is the conviction of this great truth, as a principle permeating the government of God, that makes David speak of the discomfiture of his enemies as a thing already accomplished. He sees every blow aimed at him recoiling upon themselves; every machination concocted for his overthrow, rendering their own still more inevitable. A fearful thought this, to the wicked, that "his own evil shall slay him"; and yet, to others, a thought full of hope, that God has so ordered things in His universe that evil must destroy itself. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *Retribution*:—The story of Phalaris's bull, invented for the torment of others, and serving afterwards for himself, is notorious in heathen story. . . . It was a voluntary judgment which Archbishop Cranmer inflicted on himself when he thrust that very hand into the fire, and burnt it, with which he had signed to the popish articles, crying out, "Oh, my unworthy right hand!" but who will deny that the hand of the Almighty was also concerned in it! (*William Turner.*)

## PSALM VIII.

**VERS. 1-9. How excellent is Thy name in all the earth**!—*David's poetical sensitiveness*:—In all probability this Psalm is the first, or at all events one of the very first, David ever wrote. It breathes the spirit of those lonely nights which he must so often have passed keeping watch over his father's sheep on the wild hills of Bethlehem. To a lad of his strong poetical temperament, the glory of the Syrian sunset, the gradual assembling of the stars, as of an innumerable flock in the silent pastures overhead; the moon, "like a fair shepherdess," walking in her beauty; and, as night began to wane, "the bright and morning star," flashing over the hills of Moab, must have spoken in a language which he was inspired to understand of the excellency of the great Creator of all—of the nothingness, yet at the same time the dignity, of man. In after life how often had he to "tune his harp to notes of woe"? but its first recorded strains are those of adoring praise. David appears to me to stand out eminently from other men, as hearing a voice in the phenomena of nature. I account him as the first of the prophets of nature, of whom, in some sense, Wordsworth was the last. The lessons once learned have become obvious; but to utter them for the first time required inspiration. (*Henry Housman.*) *The excellency of the Divine name and nature universal*:—Joshua Reynolds closing his lecture on art said, "And now, gentlemen, there is but one name which I bring to your attention, it is the name of Michael Angelo." And so in all the spheres of art, science, and discovery, there are names which rise peerless above all others. But names which are known in one land are unknown in another, or their right to distinction is often disputed. You would not get universal unanimity about any one celebrity, however worthy. Only concerning Christ can it be said, "How excellent is Thy name in all the earth." *The glory of God in His works*:—The glory of God in His creatures, rightly considered, should, for the excellency of the work, strike an astonishment into us on the one side, and inforce us on the other to be thankful unto Him, that maketh His power and providence appear so clearly in them, and that not only for His glory, but for our good. God's power and providence seen in His creatures serveth for a double end—the comfort of His children, and the terror and confusion of the wicked. Ver. 4 serveth to humble man, and to beat him down; for if he be compared with other creatures, there is no such excellency and durableness in him as in them; neither yet such as he himself imagineth to be in himself. Vers. 5-8 set forth the graces and blessings that God hath bestowed upon man, not to the end that man thereby should wax proud, and swell above measure, but to inforce him—1. To thankfulness to the giver; 2. To a right use of them in himself and for others; 3. The more and more to humble him. Let man consider what excellency he hath lost through Adam's fall, and bewail his misery; and, let him, on the other side, well weigh the grace bestowed on him in Christ, and be joyful and thankful for mercy: knowing this, that if the creatures be not now subject to us, it is by reason of the body and relics of sin which yet remain in us; and that therefore, if we would have a conquest over the creatures, we must begin first to get a victory upon sin, or else we shall never profit or prevail that way. If any man will object and say that many creatures are subdued to many people that are without a God in the world, and which notwithstanding remain in their sin, I answer, that God's dispensing in mercy with our iniquity, or other men's, is no impeachment of the truth of this doctrine; nay rather, it should the more further us, not only in thankfulness to Him for His goodness, but in valiancy and courage to combat against iniquity, and that unto blood, because we already have half a victory, and may be sure of all needful supply in order to complete the victory. (*Thomas Wilcocks.*) *The supremely excellent name*:—Was "Gittith" a tune or instrument brought from Gath? (1 Sam. xxvii. 2.) This exquisite ode, which can only reach its fulfilment in Christ (Heb. ii. 6-9), was evidently composed at night. It probably dates from the early shepherd days, when wild creatures crept around the fold, and night-birds screamed, reminding the singer of the animal world, as constituting the human kingdom. I. THE INSCRIPTION (ver. 1). Jehovah our Lord. Our Lord Jesus is here. II. THE ASCRIPTION (vers. 1, 2). His name excellent, and so mighty that His strength communicated to babes is more than enough to vanquish and silence His foes (1 Cor. i. 25; Matt. xxi. 16). III. THE COMPARISON (vers. 3, 4). At first sight there is a great descent from the glory of the heavens to frail man. But we may not confound size and greatness. There are as many



worlds of wonder too minute for our vision as there are which are too great for our understanding. IV. THE COMPENSATION (vers. 5-8). Man, though so seemingly insignificant, was only a little lower than the angels, and is invested with the vicegerency of the lower orders of creation (Gen. i. 26). As yet the Psalm is fulfilled only in Jesus. But it shall be restored to man (Isa. xi. 6-9). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

*Good reasons for praising God*:—I. AS FILLING THE UNIVERSE WITH HIS GLORY.—1. His excellence fills the earth—in its natural constitution, in its human history, and in its redemptive economy. 2. His excellency is above the heavens. How high are the heavens! II. AS HONOURING THE FEEBLEST INSTRUMENTALITY. He does not depend, like human sovereigns, on the great and mighty. History abounds with examples of God accomplishing great ends by feeble means—such as, the exodus of the Jews by Moses, the redemption of the world by Christ, the propagation of the gospel by feeble men. This truth serves to check an unholy humility, and also an unholy pride. III. AS CREATING THE WONDERS OF THE STELLAR HEAVENS. Here is a figurative mode of representing the skill and delicacy of the work—"the work of Thy fingers." How does the study of the heavens impress man with the glory of God! IV. AS REGARDING MANKIND WITH HIS SPECIAL FAVOUR. The Psalmist seems to be impressed with God's infinite goodness to man in three respects. 1. In the greatness of the attention He pays him. 2. In the greatness of the nature He has given him. 3. In the greatness of the authority He intrusts to him. This Psalm reminds us of our heavenly origin, wonderful natures, and sublime destinies. (*Homilist.*)

*The excellency of the Divine name*:—How affecting to the mind is the traditional and immemorial suppression of the name "Jehovah." Though false in principle and destitute of Scripture authority, it cannot be denied that this reticence has something almost sublime about it, and is far better than the frivolous levity with which God's holy name is tossed from mouth to mouth, not only in profane discussion, but even in courts of justice, not to say in the pulpit and in ordinary religious speech. Religious awe was no doubt indicated by the suppression of this name, and could not have been associated with a more legitimate or worthy object than that pregnant tetragrammaton, in the four characters of which, as in a sacramental symbol, is wrapped up the germ, or rather the quintessence, of that wonderful preparatory system which excited and sustained the expectation of the Saviour until He came. We cannot tell all the reasons for the use of the two principal Divine names by the sacred writers in specific cases, but there can be little doubt that Jehovah is distinguished in the Hebrew Scriptures from all other names of the Godhead as the name of the God of Israel, His Church, His chosen people. Elohim was a generic name which was common to the true God with all others, but Jehovah was the name of God as in especial covenant with His people. It suggested no vague idea of divinity, but was a much warmer name, telling of God as making Himself known to and dwelling in the midst of them. But the name itself does not signify anything of this singular relation, it suggests nothing of a local or national kind, but only tells of God as the self-existent, independent, and eternal essence, "I am what I am." This may have been in order to remind Israel that He was not a God distinct from the Creator of the universe, but the one sole self-existent one. And there was need for such precaution, for never was a people more prone to arrogate to themselves exclusive possession in God. They would not allow that He was the God of the Gentiles also, and from this the fatal step was almost unavoidable to the conclusion that their God was not the God of nature or the universe, but either the antagonistic principle in some monstrous scheme of dualism, or an inferior Deity restricted to the Holy Land. And so the Greeks and Romans learned to sneer at the provincial God of Palestine. The Scriptures contain the clearest exposition of the true sense of the name Jehovah, and declare His name glorious in all the earth. They describe the heavens as the work of His fingers. Hence, as men saw His glory they saw too their own littleness, and wondered that God should remember man. It is not, however, before their material works that man is called to bow, for matter is no more above mind on a large scale than on a smaller one, no more in the earth than in a clod, in a sea than in a drop. Mind is ever superior to matter. Hence the Psalm boldly declares of man, "Thou hast made him to lack little of divinity"—for so the words affirm,—"Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour." And yet more because of man's moral resemblance to God. But though unfallen man might have triumphed in this blessed likeness, how can we who have fallen away from it so terribly? How, then, could David so speak of man? He could not had he deemed that likeness irrevocably lost. He contemplates man as saved in

Christ, not only reinstated, but exalted higher—"The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven." Contemplate, then, the glorious face of nature, and remember what man once was, what he is, and what he yet shall be. Then shall we, as Stephen, exclaim, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Read, then, the name of God our King and Saviour traced in letters of light upon the whole material universe. (*J. Addison Alexander, D.D.*)

*Religious affections in their objective ground*:—Gracious affections spring from the beauty and excellence of Divine things. "Christian love is the fountain of all gracious affections. The Divine excellency and glory of God and of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the works of God and the ways of God, are the primary reasons why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any conceived benefit that he has received from them. Self-love cannot properly be said to be the first foundation of his love to these things." I. THE WORLD'S PEOPLE. 1. Self-love is a principle that is entirely natural, and hence cannot be the foundation of what is gracious or spiritual (Luke vi. 32). 2. Self-love is also the foundation of gratitude in the world's people. 3. Self-love may give rise to a sort of love to God. False education will make men grateful to a God of their own imagination. Insensibility to the heinousness of sin may move the natural affections toward a being they imagine to be like themselves. II. THE HYPOCRITE. The genesis of their affections follows much the order of the world's people. 1. They rejoice in themselves. 2. They secondarily rejoice in God because He is so good to them, and has made so much of them. 3. They rejoice in their own experiences. 4. Their affections are moved by impulses, pride, conceit, and selfish considerations. 5. They are great talkers about themselves. If we will believe them, they are no ordinary saints. III. GOD'S PEOPLE. 1. They contemplate and adore the matchless perfections of God, the beauty of Christ, the sweetness of grace, the wisdom of redemption, the completeness of God's law, and the like. A natural affection does not have its chief roots in such a soil as this. 2. Secondarily, they rejoice that so glorious a Being is theirs. 3. Then they love God because of His marvellous kindness and unparalleled condescension (Psa. cxvi. 1). 4. In God's goodness they see a mirror that reflects the beauty, the grace and the perfection of His being and attributes, and from hence are begotten a holy gratitude and a heavenly love. 5. "The saints' love to God is the fruit of God's love to them, as it is the gift of that love." 6. As is the genesis of love, so is the genesis of spiritual joy, delight, and pleasure: "All my springs are in Thee" (Psa. lxxxvii. 7). (*L. O. Thompson.*)

*The excellent Name*:—I. THIS PSALM IS—1. A hymn of praise to the Creator, giving glory to "Jehovah our Lord." By His "Name" we understand His revealed nature, as made manifest in His—(1) works of creation (vers. 3, 6, 7, 8); (2) acts of salvation (vers. 4, 5). 2. A Messianic hymn—(1) referred by Christ to Himself (Matt. xxi. 16); (2) quoted of Him (Heb. ii. 6-9; 1 Cor. xv. 27). 3. A hymn of the Ascension. This seems the special thought (Heb. ii. 9, where ver. 5 is alluded to, and Acts ii. 33). II. THE TEXT IN PARTICULAR IS EXPRESSIVE OF THE GREAT DOCTRINE OF THE ASCENSION. 1. "Our Lord" Jesus Christ is "the LORD," *i.e.* JEHOVAH. His "Name" is indeed the Divine Name, for Jesus signifies "JEHOVAH-SAVIOUR" (Heb. i. 4; see its lengthened form in Num. xiii. 16). 2. "The earth" is the sphere in which the "excellence" of His Name is manifested. (1) In the past, by the marvellous revelation of His sinless human life, by His mighty words and works, by His sacrifice for sin, and by His "glorious resurrection and ascension." (2) In the present, by the power of His gospel, subduing, as it is, all things under His feet." 3. "All the earth" shall one day be brought to own that His "Name" is "excellent." 4. Yet His chiefest "glory" is now "set" "above the heavens," to be revealed in its full excellence only when He shall come again to take to Him His power and reign. III. THE "NAME" OF JESUS SHOULD BE PROVED "EXCELLENT" IN OUR EXPERIENCE. 1. As a power to salvation (Acts iv. 12). He is ascended up on high to perpetually plead the merits of His saving Name. And it is in that Name alone that there is hope for sinners. That Name, "Jehovah-Saviour," means one able and willing to save; and it is the only "excellent" one to which all must look (Isa. xlv. 22). 2. As a power to holiness (Acts ii. 33). The ascended Saviour has given to the Church the grace of His Holy Spirit, to be implored in His "Name," and sent forth in His "Name" (John xiv. 26, xvi. 24). The Holy Ghost teaches us the "things of Christ," and makes us so realise the excellence of His name, that for it we "count all things but loss." (*T. H. Barnett.*)

Ver. 2. **Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength.**—*The strength of feeble instrumentalities*.—The sudden drop from the glories of the heavens to the babble and prattle of infancy and childhood is most impressive, and gives extraordinary force to the paradox that the latter's witness is more powerful to silence gainsayers than that of the former. This conviction is expressed in a noble metaphor, which is blurred by the rendering "strength." The word here rather means "a strength," in the old use of the term—that is, a stronghold or fortress; and the image, somewhat more daring than cold western taste finds permissible, is that out of such frail material as children's speech, God builds a tower of strength, which, like some border castle, will bridle and still the restless enemy. There seems no sufficient reason for taking "children and sucklings" in any but its natural meaning, however the reference to lowly believers may accord with the spirit of the Psalm. The children's voices are taken as a type of feeble instruments, which are yet strong enough to silence the enemy. Childhood, "with no language but a cry," is, if rightly regarded in its source, its budding possibilities, its dependence, its growth, a more potent witness to a more wondrous name than are all the stars. In like manner, man is man's clearest revelation of God. The more lowly he is, the more lofty his testimony. What are all His servants' words but the babbling of children who "do not know half the deep things they speak"? God's strongest fortress is built of weakest stones. . . . If the two parts of the Psalm are to be kept together, the theme of the compendious first portion must be the same as that of the second, namely, the glory of God as revealed by nature and man, but most chiefly by the latter, notwithstanding and even by his comparative feebleness. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*God glorified by children's mouths*.—This Psalm sings of the grandeur of God as seen in creation. Our subject is His power displayed in human weakness. I. THERE IS A CONFLICT. Our text speaks of enemies. We know who they are—the seed of the serpent. We know how it began, and it goes on, on the enemy's part, in the same fashion. God uses weapons, mainly, of a moral and spiritual sort. He has used, and He can and will, when needful, use others. II. IN THIS CONFLICT THE WEAPONS ARE VERY SINGULAR. "Out of the mouth of babes," &c. Bring hither that sweet babe. See that little mouth—it challenges a kiss: and note with joy that God may use that little mouth as His conquering weapon against the devil. I have seen many an ancient cannon upon which were moulded in bronze the words, "The last argument of kings." Yes, but the gracious arguments of the King of kings are sent home by a human mouth, and that of a little child. How Satan must be angered that his craft is not met by craft. Already the testimony of feeble men has been used as the great power of God. How are these weapons used? These strangely soft, yet sharp, feeble, yet mighty weapons—how are they used? 1. They smite by prayer. Children pray, and they are heard. 2. By praise, which lowers the pride of His adversaries, while they cry "Hosannah!" and sing the praise of Jesus' name. 3. And by testimony. We never know what one child's mouth can do. Christ is the Word, but these mouths supply the voices by which it is sounded forth. The Hebrew reads, "hast Thou founded strength," as if the very foundation of the Church's strength lay in the mouths that God moves to speak. III. THE WARRIORS IN THIS WARFARE ARE VERY SPECIAL. "Babes and sucklings" (Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i.). Such are those who proclaim Christ in the world. Our Lord would get little honour from our race if all children's voices were hushed, and all child-like spirits with them. Scribes and Pharisees never cry "Hosannah!" they are so busy binding on their phylacteries, washing their hands, and devouring widows' houses. The first to cry "Hosannah!" are the children, and the next are those who are like them. Some say, "To shout and sing is children's work"; so it is, and it is ours because we are children too. Now, note IV. That THE QUALIFICATION OF THESE WARRIORS LIES IN THEIR WEAK SIDE. If it lay on the strong side, we should read, "Out of the mouth of men of middle age, in the prime of life; of wise old men, who have had long experience, God ordaineth strength." But no, it is "Out of the mouths of babes," &c. Thus the Lord puts the adversary to a perpetual reproach. He puts a child against His giant foe, and overcomes him. Our power to serve God lies on our weak side. He uses not our greatness, but our littleness. You know what the learned men say is the weak part of some of us—they put it something like this: "We regret the preacher's total inability to keep abreast of the times; his incapacity for modern thought; and his want of affection for the higher culture." That is our weakness. Yes, and our strength, and therefore we glory in it. "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus



Christ and Him crucified." If all God's servants will come to this, they will do far more good than by the so-called "culture," which is nothing but the science of growing more weeds than usual. I have desired to be a little child again, and wished that I had never heard of the existence of a quibbler. We hear now-a-days much of "great thinkers"; we prefer to be great believers. When the Church gets back to her simple faith in Jesus, she shall be qualified for victory. She shall vanquish the world. When she has thrown aside the wooden sword of carnal reason and has taken up the true Jerusalem blade of faith in God. Then because of all this, let me plead—V. FOR A LOVING REVERENCE FOR CHILDHOOD. It seems to me that in the Lord's battle there is always a babe in the forefront. The child found in the ark of bulrushes crushes the power of Pharaoh; the boy David, Goliath; and the still loftier story of the battle of the Lamb opens in like manner, "Unto us a Child is born," &c. Never doubt the possibility of children's conversions. Never despise them. Do not say, "Oh, they are only a parcel of boys and girls!" What if they are? May they not be a better parcel than some of you? If we could get the simple trustfulness of childhood back again, it would be a great gain. Let us not undervalue the praises or the service of children. That is a sweet vein. "And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child." In the victory of the Church it is written, "A little child shall lead them." This city of ours is better evangelised by our Sunday schools than by all the rest of us put together. Little Mary and Tommy come back from school, and they find that father is hardly dressed; he has not been to a place of worship, but reading the Sunday paper; he don't want any of your singing and preaching. But the children begin to sing, and when dinner is over, they talk about what teacher said, and perhaps say something about the sermon. And so the father gets more singing and preaching than he bargained for. When they go to bed, they clasp their little hands and pray for their father, and he is obliged to hear them. Thus he gets praying as well as singing. The children are missionaries. They enter where others cannot. Tommy and Mary can't be shut out. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*Little children God's stronghold for troubled men:*—The common interpretation is, that God uses men who are, for weakness and insufficiency, as babes. Not that He literally uses "babes and sucklings." This interpretation, so common in the Church, has never found favour in the synagogue. The Rabbis have a surprising love for children. They apply to children and schools all the Scripture verses that speak of flowers and gardens. The Talmud is full of stories which indicate this love for the little ones—*e.g.* "There was once a great drought, and the most pious men wept and prayed for rain, but none came. At length an insignificant person prayed, and instantly the heavens covered themselves with clouds, and the rain fell. 'Who are you,' they cried, 'whose prayers have alone prevailed?' And he answered, 'I am a teacher of little children.'" Again, "When God was about to give His law to His people, He asked them whom they would offer as guarantees that they would keep it holy, and they said, 'Abraham.' God said, 'Abraham has sinned; Isaac, Jacob, Moses himself, they have all sinned; I cannot accept them.' Then they said, 'May our children be witnesses and our guarantees?' And God accepted them, even as it is written. 'From the mouth of the little babes has He preached His empire.'" The literal rendering is to be preferred. This verse is quoted in the Gospel by Matthew in a way which is quite decisive of the meaning. That we should thus understand them is shown—1. From the general drift of the Psalm. The little children trust and love and are at peace, though men be so different. 2. From sympathy and agreement in this truth, which we find in other great poets, such as Wordsworth, "Trailing clouds of glory," &c. 3. From our own experience, children suggest helpful, restful thoughts. If in his origin man is so pure and so divine, must he not be capable of a Divine strength and blessedness? (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*)

*The useful ministry of children:*—In the Middle Ages lived the great theologian, the great Chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, whose whole life was spent in storms of political struggle and religious strife, and when, after his long years of turbulent battle to beard popes and burn heretics, he took refuge in the silence and solitude of a monastic cell, his one joy was to gather the little children round his bed and bid them pray, "Lord, have mercy on Thy poor servant, Jean Gerson"; and even the strong combative soul of Luther melted to tenderness in the presence of little ones; and it was the voice of a little girl singing a hymn on a doorstep at Weimar that dispelled the heartache of Philip Melancthon; and the agonies of the Scotch martyr Wishart were soothed when, to the taunt that he had a devil, the voice of a little child was heard replying,

"Yon man does not speak like a man that hath a devil"; and George Whitfield was cheered and encouraged when he saw the little boys and girls who had gathered around his pulpit lifting to him in pity their tearful faces when the mobs pelted him with stones and dirt. And thus to these saints, and many more, has the trustfulness and simplicity of little children been, as it was to the heart of David, a strength made perfect in weakness to still their own enemies and the enemies of God. And which of us personally has not felt from the reminiscences of his own childhood, if, indeed, a pang of shame to think that we are in some things farther from heaven than then, yet also an inspiration of hope and strength? (*Dean Farrar, D.D.*) *A prophecy of the Incarnation*.—These words are alleged by our blessed Saviour (Matt. xxi. 16), to prove that Christ must reign till He has subdued all His enemies under His feet. He that reads this whole Psalm would think it were nothing else but a description of man's excellency, whom God had made next to the angels in dignity, and given him dominion over all things He had made. How is that which is a description of mankind in general, a prophecy of Christ in special? The key of the interpretation of this Psalm is to be sought in the words, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings," &c. 1. The meaning of the words as they stand in the Psalm. The whole drift of the Psalm is to praise and glorify God for the dignity wherewith He hath invested man. This glory and honour is seen in two particulars. (1) In that God hath ordained that weak and feeble creature man to subdue and conquer His enemies. (2) In that He hath made man the lord of all His creatures. 2. The purport of these words was fulfilled in our blessed Saviour's incarnation. The devil by sin brought mankind into thralldom, and became the prince of this world, himself with his angels being worshipped and served everywhere as gods. To vanquish and exterminate this enemy, and redeem the world from this miserable thralldom, the Son of God took on Him, not the nature of angels, but the nature of weak and despicable man, that grows from a babe and suckling. And the Son of Man enables also other sons of men, His disciples and ministers, to do the like in His name. 3. This victory, as for the event, so for the manner of achieving it, is agreeable to our prophecy. Forasmuch as Christ our General nor fights, nor conquers by force of arms, but by the power of His Word and Spirit, which is "the power of His mouth," according to the text, "Out of the mouth," &c. (*Joseph Mede, B.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **When I consider Thy heavens.**—*Considering*.—That is what people will not do. They are thoughtless, superficial, frivolous; they do not sit down and put things together and add them up, and ask the meaning of the poetry of the total. 1. "When I consider"—I become a new man, much larger, nobler, saintlier. What does consider mean? I wonder if any six men in any audience could tell the meaning, etymological and historical and parabolical, of consider. It is a word which everybody knows. It is two words, it is two Latin words; it is *con* or *cum*, with, together: *sider*—what is there in the word *sider*? Nothing. Take care! *Sider* comes a long way up the track of language; it was born *sidus*. That is what you say when you write your married name; under it you put *née*, born—another name, your father's name, which you have relinquished in favour of another name. *Sidus* means star; it is the root of sidereal heavens, the starry heavens, the stellar universe, and the like. Con-sidere-alise—when we star together—put the planets into syllables and words and paragraphs; when I considere-alise, make a lesson-book of the stars; when I punctuate my discourse with millenniums, then I pray. If men would do this they would be religious, but they are frivolous—"What is in the paper this morning?" Ah me! 'tis hideous and disheartening. When I, said the Psalmist, who kept his shepherd's crook in the belt of Orion, when I considere-alise, talk in stars and think in planets and pray in constellations—. Reverence is the basis of true character. Little subjects will make little men; gossip will dethrone an Aristotle. 2. How this considere-alising of things changes their whole aspect, their entire value, relation, and meaning. We do not loop our subjects on to the great cars, so we perform little journeys, and we are no sooner out of the house than we are in it again. We do not outrun the height of the planets; we are so easily excited by subjects that really have nothing in them. Who would speak of a great earthquake? There never was such a thing, except within the limits of the little earth itself; then it was very great, it almost shook down the chest of drawers in my house! For a time I thought the bookcase was going to fall over me; it was a great earthquake! No, a spasm not worth talking about; if the earth had quaked itself out of existence

it would not have deserved the epithet great. God is great, and His heavens are as nothing before Him, and the universe is to Him like a dewdrop trembling on the leaf of a flower. 3. We must therefore get into the right way of thinking about things; we must consider, we must read much in starlight; we must bring the right scale to bear upon the events which disturb us so much, and then they will disturb us no longer. The Psalmist says, "When I consider Thy heavens, the moon, and the stars, which Thou hast ordained," then I get the right view of everything else. We must get back to the geometric measurements, to the stellar spaces, to the all-quieting immensities; then we shall be great, because we shall be in our measure like God. 4. And when I thus consider, my spirit is tranquillised; a great peace steals over my soul. When I look at death I am disquieted and overborne and impoverished; when I look at immortality I am young, I come out of my chamber as a bridegroom ready to run a race, like a giant that cannot be tired. Thus there are two views of life, the detranquillising view and the all-tranquillising view. We may spend so much time with death as to think the universe is but a ghostly shadow. Why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, count His stars, be familiar with His heavens; hear the man of science who tells thee that, having seen the night-glory, the telescope has found forty thousand galleries such as the gallery which is visible to the poor struggling astronomical instrument; and when thou dost bathe thyself in the rivers of the stars thy flesh shall come again as the flesh of a little child, and thou shalt begin to praise God in a new sweet hymn. 5. "When I consider," I find that things are not so roughly related and antagonised as at first they seemed to be. I was not looking from the right point of view, I did not get far enough away from my subject, I was in the thick of the battle, in the very midst of the storm of dust, I could not see things in their right relation and proportion; but when I climbed the stairway of the stars and looked down upon the earth and time and measurable space I said, All things work together for good to them that love God. 6. "When I consider," consider *realise*, put the stars together, I get time drawn into its right relation or driven off into its right prospective, I punctuate the literature of Providence properly. Consideration, properly defined, is a religious duty. In 1 Samuel xii. 24 you have exactly what I mean—"Consider how great things He hath done for you." Job says the same thing in his own grand way, "Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God" (xxxvii. 14). Put things together; give God time. You are impatient because you are little poor fussy fools; give Him time. Consideration is a great element in wisdom and practical prudence. Sometimes men cannot go to the stars, so God has made some little stars for them to look at. How kind He is, and condescending! He says, in effect, The stars are too many for you, you feel a noise in your little heads, and it is not good for you to look at the Milky Way and the Great Bear and the gleaming Orion and the beauteous Venus; so I will make some starlets for you, little living stars, asteroids. How sweet! Hear His voice through the medium of His prophet, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider"—the same word, with all its stars and Milky Ways—"consider her ways, and be wise" (Prov. vi. 6). So you can get the lesson reduced as to mere size; you can have a universe in a microcosm, you can have all creation reduced to a minimum, so that you can see God's meaning and learn God's philosophy. Consideration is the only profitable use of history. We find, then, in Isaiah xliii. 18, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old." That is the reason why you are so poor, and why you are so easily driven about. You might be rich in history, you might be millionaires in retrospect. Consideration is the best use of nature. Consider the lilies, how they grow: connect them with the stars. And consideration is the greatest impulse to true piety, as we are taught in Hebrews xii. 3, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Consideration is the greatest guarantee of self-control. "Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Stars have fallen, angels have dropped out of line; consider thyself. Solitude is often necessary to true consideration. God said to the prophet, "Go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee" (Ezek. iii. 22). (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The revelation of God in His works*:—I. ALL THE DIVINE WORKS EXPRESS THE DIVINE CHARACTER. Long after Niebuhr had ended his eastern travels, when he had become blind and debilitated by old age, he beguiled his weary hours "in recalling the aspect of the oriental heavens. As he lay in his bed, the glittering splendour of the nocturnal Asiatic sky, on which he had so often gazed, or its lofty vault and azure by day, imaged themselves to his mind in the hour of stillness, and ministered to him his sweetest enjoyment." Not the heavens alone, but the whole earth is full of its



Maker's glory. He said, "Let the earth bring forth its plants." And it did so. He said this in willing it. His act of choosing is virtually His act of speaking; and as a printed word is a permanent memorial of the speaker's thought, so the plants yielding seed are perennial mementoes of their Author's mind. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth its living creatures." It was so; and these living creatures are the published words of Him who spake, and it was done. There are forces in matter and in mind. These forces are preserved, as they were originated, by the positive act of God. This act is His speech. II. THE METHODS IN WHICH THE DIVINE CHARACTER IS REVEALED BY THE DIVINE OPERATIONS. 1. One of these methods is the use of signs, which are fitted in their very nature to suggest the truth pertaining to God. There is a natural language for expressing spiritual ideas. The proverb is, that actions speak louder than words. The tear makes known what the tongue conceals. The sigh, the groan, the blush, the drooping head expose the secrets which no words can tell. Now, if an elevated gesture of man have a fitness to express a lofty thought, much more has the expanse of the firmament, or some mountain of the Lord, a fitness to suggest an idea of His exaltation. The works of God are adapted to an end; this adaptedness is an effect, and therefore a sign of His skill. His works are fitted to a good end; this fitness is a result, and thus an exponent of His wisdom. His works are so adjusted as to awaken the hope of a reward for well-doing, or the fear of a penalty for ill-doing; this adjustment is an effect, and thus a declaration of His purpose to remunerate the good and to punish the bad. If any object be suited in its structure to impress the mind of man, this very suitability is an expression of the mind of God. Whoever attends to the teaching of nature listens to the conversation of Him who speaks through all nature. The laws of health are prescriptions from the great Physician. The inward structure of things will sometimes awaken in the most atheistic mind a fear of that mysterious Agent who "maketh darkness His pavilion round about Him," and "gathereth the winds in His fists." Nor is the natural language in which God reveals His attributes limited to external symbols. 2. We feel the internal signs of His character and plans. The approval of a good man's conscience has a meaning higher than that of a mere human phenomenon. It is an expression of the Divine justice. It is a smile of God alluring us to persevere in well-doing. The remorse of conscience is also an alphabetic sign in the book of nature that God is just. Their sensibilities, more than the stars of heaven, declare the glory of God; and their intellect, more than the firmament, sheweth His wisdom. 3. Another method in which the works of Jehovah express His character is the use of signs which have a conventional fitness to suggest ideas. He has superadded arbitrary to natural language in the communication of His truth. The rainbow has nothing in its structure adapted to reveal a Divine promise respecting another flood; but the Author of it gave it a meaning, and made it, as it were, an epistle printed on the clouds and recording a Divine purpose. The articulate speech of men also is, not less really than the earth itself, a work of God. He inserted within us the tendency to use arbitrary language. These influences of speech "declare the glory of God." But more than this. He uses our words as His own vocabulary. He employed arbitrary language in conversing with Adam, Abraham, Moses. He adopted Hebrew, Chaldaic, Greek, Aramaean sentences in communicating His truth through prophets and apostles. He now instructs men in the words of His ministers. David exclaims, "O Lord, our Lord, who hast set Thy glory above the heavens,—out of the mouth of children Thou hast prepared for Thyself a power that shall overcome the enemy"; and if the voice of babes "declare the glory of God," then much more do the lips of His evangelists "show His handy work." III. CONSIDER SOME OF THE REASONS WHY JEHOVAH UNFOLDS HIS CHARACTER IN HIS WORKS. 1. One obvious reason is, that the manifestation of His attributes is inseparable from the exercise of them. If He act at all, He must act out the principles of His being; and to act them out is to make them known. When He governs the world He puts forth His attributes; in putting them forth He exposes, expresses them. He exerts His wisdom in giving to the mind an impulse to infer the nature of the cause from the nature of the effect. In exerting this wisdom He exhibits it; for it is this wisdom, as the cause, to which the mind reasons from itself as the effect. He cannot form an image of Himself without disclosing the original excellence which is imaged forth. How can He let His benevolence have its free scope unless He form sentient beings able to enjoy His benevolence; and how can they fully enjoy it unless they perceive it; and how can they perceive it unless He show it unto them; and how can He show it unto them clearly unless it appear in His deeds? If

He exercise His mercy toward men, He must relieve the suffering ; if He do give this relief, He must therein manifest the mercy which He feels. It is necessary for Him either to repress His love or to express it. Why should He repress it ? Why close the gates through which His benignant favours flow forth as a stream ? 2. Another reason why Jehovah makes use of His works as a language revealing His attributes is, that He promotes the welfare of His offspring by the revelation. The Father pleases His children by appearing to them. The disciples were troubled until they heard the cheering voice, "It is I, be not afraid." The Psalmist, in our context, was triumphant when he beheld the sun coming as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a hero to run a race. Other men are often in solitude ; or if in society, they have no friends. But the child of God, wherever he moves, is near to his Maker. Under the venerable oak, or on the skirts of the deep sea, or in the pure air of the mountain-top, he talks with the Great Spirit. The laws of his own mind are the words of his Friend whispering within him. In the constitutional workings of the soul God does manifest Himself to it. An author of an effect must be some free will. But many effects without us and within us are not produced by a created free will ; then they are produced by the Uncreated. They make known God's laws. They disclose His feelings. The acts of conscience testify of His purposes. The decisions of the reason speak His counsel. The necessary beliefs of men are His teachings. All ethical axioms are His revelation. The moral freedom of men is His express summons to a right preference. Their innocent joys are His words of good cheer. Perhaps it is impossible for any power to impress on the mind any truth, by mere words, so deeply as by acts, which are emphatic words. 3. Another reason why Jehovah reveals His excellence through His works is, that He promotes His own blessedness by the revelation. He might, in merely written syllables, inform us that He is omnipotent ; but as a Sovereign He chooses to speak to us by the globes of heaven, which declare Him to be Almighty. He might, in a merely artificial language, indicate His benevolence ; but He prefers to address us in our own joys and hopes, which rehearse His loving-kindness. But why do we presume that the blessedness of the Most High is promoted by His development of His excellence ? So far as we have learned, it is the law of all sentient beings to express themselves. Even the cattle on a thousand hills, the birds of the air, have an irrepresible longing to make known what they feel. It is the law of all mind, above all a pure mind, of course then an infinite mind, to bring itself out to the light. Why then should not the Being of whom we are the image feel an immeasurable bliss in gratifying His desire to manifest, in the view of others, what He enjoys Himself ? But He has more than this constitutional tendency to develop His character. This character is a good in itself, and deserves His own as well as our supreme love ; delighting in it, He must be happy in the radiating of it upon His offspring. The exercise of His attributes is a source of bliss, and we have seen that He cannot exercise them in their normal way without manifesting them ; He must therefore rejoice in their manifestation. He cannot raise men to their destined thrones without illustrating His own mercy in their exaltation : why should He hide that mercy ? These things, such things, are not done in a corner. A fountain does not keep itself compressed in a ball of ice. The sun does not bind its rays to and within itself. From within, outward, all affections flow forth. From the recesses of the soul to the well-being of the universe all right affections move forward. The diffusing of its own joy is the law of a loving heart, and only in the diffusing of it is the full development of it, and only in its development is the consummating of its rest. IV. REMARKS WHICH ARE SUGGESTED BY THIS THEME.

1. The reasonableness of Jehovah in His retributive administration. He loves virtue. His constitutional desire is to manifest His love. Why should He restrain this desire ? But if He express it His nature prompts Him to express it by act. And the act by which He will make known His love of virtue,—known thoroughly by being felt deeply,—is the exciting of the moral sensibility of virtuous agents in favour of their own rectitude. Their complacency of conscience, and many of its preliminary and consequent joys, will be their reward. The reward is worked out according to the laws of their constitution. But these laws are the work, and therefore the word of God. They express His remunerative justice. He will reveal His loving approval in our moral judgments ; these will be the heavens declaring the glory of God. And is it not reasonable that He should honestly express what He inwardly feels ? This disposition to express His delight in the pure of heart, and to make them blissful in receiving the expression, is His remunerative justice to them. Equally reasonable is the punitive justice of the Most High. He abhors

sin. No finite mind can ever fathom the depth of His displeasure toward one solitary transgression. Shall He conceal His displeasure? His abhorrence of sin is nothing dishonourable, nothing wrong. Why should He hesitate to express it? It is what it ought to be, noble, magnanimous. Why shall He not be honest in revealing it? And if He do reveal it, why shall He not adopt the method which He prefers in His ordinary dispensations; the method which the law of His being has prescribed; the method of action, the emphatic, the Divine speech? The punishment is worked out according to the laws of their constitution. But these laws are the device of God. They express what He feels. The upbraidings of conscience are the declarations of His punitive justice. And is it not a punishment from Jehovah?—what can be a severer recompense than for us, if we are left incorrigible, to have the inward assurance that our Friend, our best Friend, is ever near us, frowning upon us,—our compunction being His frown;—not because He is indifferent to our persons, but because He loves them, and therefore abhors our suicidal crimes, and exposes His abhorrence, not in artificial forms of speech, but in our own reason, in our moral judgment, in all the pains by which He awakens our displacement, and which He appends to it. 2. The consistency of the atonement with other parts of the Divine administration. As the Most High loves to express Himself in the material world, so He loves to express Himself in the phenomena of the mind and heart. As He chooses to disclose His attributes in the punishment of the wicked, when this punishment is needful for the common welfare, so He chooses to dispense with punishment when He can disclose the same attributes, and impress the same truths, and promote the same well-being in some equivalent way. The power of any language to suggest ideas and excite emotions is mysterious. Articulate speech is a wonder. The significance of penal suffering is felt more clearly than it can be described. But the fulness and variety and intensity of meaning and of impression in the atonement are what even the angels desire to look into. 3. A third remark, suggested by our theme, is on the harmony of both the visible and invisible works of God with the feelings of a devout man. He keeps his ear attent to the sounds of the land, air, sea, and therefore they express to him rich truths. Ebal shouts to Gerizim, and Gerizim shouts back to Ebal the words of the Lord. He draws nigh to them who seek Him in His works, and He hides Himself from them who care not to listen for His voice. The longer we listen to a distant sound, so much the more distinctly do we hear it; for the atmosphere becomes wonted to it, and our minds become expert by discipline in detecting the auricular vibrations. So the longer we listen to the voices of nature, they become the more full and rich in their expression of Divine truth. Old age refines the spiritual ear; and as the body decays the soul becomes more and more sensitive to the undulations of the spiritual atmosphere. And as century after century rolls by, the whisperings of the Divine Spirit will be more and more clearly recognised, and that volume of sound which came to the ear of David from the skies by day and by night will be gaining new emphasis and new power, until, at the millennium, the heavens will declare the glory of God, so that all men shall hear, “as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying: Allelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” 4. The Christian preacher is an interpreter both of nature and of revelation. One spirit reigns in both. The truths of the Bible are illustrated by the phenomena of life, and the phenomena of life are explained by the truths of the Bible. The analogies between the two are needed for comprehending the two. The prophets and apostles vivified their discourses with these analogies. Thus is all nature alive and vocal, when the prophets describe it. More than one folio volume has been filled with comments on the suggestions which have been gathered from the myrtle, cedar, olive, willow, palm, and all trees; from the eagle, dove, sparrow, lion, viper, dragon, leviathan, and all animals; from the silver, pearl, jewel, ruby, and all manner of precious stones; from the wells without water, clouds without rain, floods, winds, flaming fire—all of them ministers of God; from children, fathers, ambassadors, rulers, shepherds, trumpeters, soldiers, captains; things in heaven and on earth and under the earth, all laid under contribution,—the grave itself forced to give up its dead men’s bones, to express and to impress some truth which men would overlook if they were not startled into an attentive mood. And since the day when men spake with tongues of fire from the Holy Ghost, the Chrysostoms and the Bernards and the Jeremy Taylors and the Whitefields of the Church have lifted up the clarion of the Gospel, and waked the echoes from the woodland and the mountain, and have made the rocks and the streams resonant with the voice of God. Now, as of old, it is the high office of every



minister to gather into his own mind, that he may diffuse through the mind of his people, instructions from the sea and the field, from science and from history, from the arts and the aims of men. He should make all the events of life pay tribute to Him who governs, as He created, the world for the Church. (*E. A. Park, D.D.*) *The Gospel and the magnitude of creation*:—Some persons object to the inaccurate language of Scripture in regard to the sun's rising and setting, and other truths established by modern astronomy. But the Scriptures were given to man to lead his soul back to God, and to do this in a way suited to every stage of man's progress. Therefore it was the common language of men, and not of the science of the schools. But there is another objection deeper than this. It is, that the Gospel revelation is out of proportion to the magnitude of creation. This difficulty arises from the view of the universe given to us by astronomical science. Our earth is very small compared with other planets revolving round the sun, and with the sun itself. And the sun is but one centre amongst myriads more. But coming more directly to the objection that is urged, we note that it takes one of two forms. I. THAT MAN, LOOKED AT IN THE LIGHT OF SUCH A MATERIAL UNIVERSE, IS TOO INSIGNIFICANT FOR SUCH INTERPOSITION AS THAT OF WHICH THE GOSPEL TELLS. But 1. The aim of the Gospel is spiritual, to save men from sin, and hence moves in a sphere entirely distinct from that of astronomy. Moreover, 2. It is the presence of intelligent life which gives significance to creation. What were the Alps and Andes; what Niagara, what the ocean, but for the thoughts they suggest? The real grandeur of the world is the soul which looks on it. Mind breathes into matter the breath of life, and so it becomes a living soul. "Man," says Pascal, "is a feeble reed trembling in the midst of creation; but then, he is endowed with thought." The very discoveries of astronomy attest the greatness of man's mind, for the discoverer is ever above the discovery. 3. Then think of man's moral capacity. He can think the material universe out of being, and we believe that once it did not exist; but moral ideas—truth, right, goodness—these are eternal both in faith and thought. 4. And mind is immortal. The material universe changes, but mind lives on in conscious identity. If in matter there is infinite space, in mind there is infinite time. 5. And if it was befitting of God to create the world and man, then it is befitting of Him to care for what He has made. Is it a worthy idea of God to think that He abandons things to chance-hazard here? that the highest part of man's nature will be left to neglect? And if the supernatural interposed to create, might it not interpose to save? 6. And the argument from astronomy helps rather than hinders faith. For if God has lavished so much pains upon the material universe, will He not do as much for the moral and spiritual for whom He has made the material? And if it be asked, why should God do so much for mind here and not elsewhere? Why here alone? How do we know He has not? It is to be expected that in other worlds He reveals Himself in infinitely varied modes, according to the need of each. II. GOD IS TOO EXALTED FOR US TO EXPECT SUCH AN INTERPOSITION. This is the second form of the objection—it brings God too low. 1. But if we allow Him a free hand in His works of power and wisdom,—which we all confess are infinite,—are we to deny Him like freedom in His display of goodness and mercy? 2. Can we say that because He is so great in the heavens, therefore He cannot be great in stooping down to our sin and misery? Such is not our standard even for men; how much less for God! No, "As high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy to them that fear Him." His greatness is the measure, not of His distance from us, but of His nearness to us. 3. Further, the balance of qualities which we require in a perfect character, supports the teaching of the Gospel. Pascal has finely said, "I do not admire in a man the extreme of one virtue, as of valour, if I do not see at the same time the extreme of the opposite virtue." Therefore in God, may we not expect that if we see, as we do, the extreme of power, there shall be also corresponding love? Is God's character ill-balanced? And power and genius are never so great as when they stoop to lift the fallen and the lost. And if God gave us this instinct, must not His own character be in harmony therewith? Could we reverence in God that which we cannot respect in man? He, therefore, is far more than mere power—infinite in goodness and in truth. It is to the glory of the Gospel that it has given us this view of God, and reveals Him crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercy. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *A sketch of the modern astronomy*:—St. Paul was wont to avail himself of all common ground between himself and his hearers, whatever it might be. And doubtless he would do the like to-day, though, in so doing, he might soar above the understanding of many amongst us. Hence I have attempted to meet the men of science on

their own ground, though, in so doing, many a humble Christian will find little for his own edification. But if those whose welfare is contemplated can be won to the Gospel, surely then others can only, and will only, rejoice. It is right to appeal to the works of nature. Our Lord did so, and the Psalmist here takes a lofty flight. He contemplates—it was probably a meditation born of the night—the starry heavens. There is much in such a scene to elevate the soul. But what are these starry lights that we behold? Their distances and their magnitudes have been calculated, and vast numbers of them have been observed. But when we see how small a spot this earth of ours is in the immensity which surrounds it, can we think that here only is the exclusive abode of life and of intelligence? Are these other far vaster worlds, which roll in other parts of creation, not also worlds both in use and dignity? Why should the Great Architect call these stately mansions into existence and leave them unoccupied? And in confirmation of this we observe that they are formed upon a system similar to our own. They have their revolutions round the sun and their succession of day and night. And future ages will probably make yet more discoveries concerning them. And we know that beyond the boundary of the planetary system there is a multitude of other lights which sparkle in our firmament and fill the whole concave of heaven with innumerable splendours. These fixed stars are at an immeasurable distance from us, but they are not shined upon by our sun; their light is self-derived, they are so many suns. And they, too, resemble our sun, in its revolution, and their number is simply incalculable. Where, then, can we limit the Almighty, or cease to trace His footsteps? And how vast are the movements of our sun and its planetary system. Not only does it revolve, but it goes forward through space, and carrying along with it all its planets and their secondaries with them. And since our sun may only be one member of a family, taking his part along with millions of others in their mighty movement for which there is ample space in immensity, how insignificant does our world appear. Think of the nebulae also. Are all these worlds unpeopled? Does God care only for us? (*Thomas Chalmers, D.D.*)

*Results of contemplation:—*I. WE ARE IMPRESSED WITH GOD'S INFINITE INDEPENDENCE OF HUMAN HELP. We cannot touch one of His stars; we cannot control their courses; we cannot increase or diminish their light. Yonder they shine, away from our poor patronage, indifferent to our powerless opinion. When, then, God asks our help in anything, He does so for our good, and never to fill up the circle of His own ability. How these star-lit heavens rebuke my officiousness! II. WE SEE THAT CREATION IS ESTABLISHED UPON A BASIS OF ORDER. There is no controversy in all those heavenly spaces! The stars are quiet. There is no collision of orbits. Everywhere there is sovereign law. The moral significance of this is plain. See what God would have in the moral universe! In the individual heart; in families; in churches; in nations. God is the God of order, and order is peace. III. WE SEE THE INFINITE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD TO PRESERVE ALL THE INTERESTS WE COMMIT TO HIM. If He can sustain that firmament of worlds, can He not sustain our little life? Can He who numbers the stars not also number the hairs of our head? Is our house greater than God's heavens, that He cannot be trusted with it? "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Does His work in the starry creation ever fail? Does the starlight waste because of the insufficiency of God's glory? O Thou who carriest the worlds in Thine hands, carry, too, my poor life! IV. WE SEE THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHYSICAL SOVEREIGNTY AND MORAL CONTROL. The weakest man is greater than the most magnificent star! God has made man greater than the heavens, though physically he dwindles into nothingness in presence of their vastness and glory. In what does his superiority consist? In all that is implied in the term "will." Man can say "No" to God. Physical government is an act of sovereignty, but moral control involves the consent of the life that is governed. The house cannot be shaken, but the tenant may spend his days in controversy and bitterness against the builder. Why cannot human life be as peaceful as the quiet heavens? Because human life has a will of its own. God seeks by all the tender persuasiveness of His love, as shown in Jesus Christ, to bring that will into harmony with His own;—when that is done, there will be a great calm. A consideration so conducted will (1) Enlarge and strengthen the mind. (2) Show contrastively the power and weakness of man. (3) Excite the highest hopes regarding human destiny. (4) Tranquillise the impatience and fretfulness incident to an incomplete life. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

*Contemplations on the starry sky:—*There is nothing of all that we can behold that more elevates the mind, or pervades it with more and grander thoughts and emotions, than the view of the starry

sky. The starry sky says to us—1. Adore the greatness and glory of God. How couldst thou fail of perceiving Him, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Almighty, the Supremely-wise, the All-gracious, in these His works? Endeavour to form a conception of the whole of this infinite system of suns and worlds, and then raise thy mind to Him who made and preserves them all. How great, how inconceivably great, must He be, the Creator and Father of all worlds, the primordial source of energy and motion, the first, eternal cause of all things, &c. Then be absorbed in devotion, in adoration, O man, when thou contempest this theatre of the marvels of thy God. 2. Be sensible also of thy insignificance, and learn humility. Thou oughtest not to be proud, but neither shouldst thou be of an abject mind. 3. Have a proper sense of thy dignity, and learn to think generously and nobly. 4. Presage thy future perfection and happiness, and get a foretaste of them! (*G. J. Zollikofer.*)

*Two voices of nature:*—The poet first looks out upon nature, and feels his littleness; then he thinks further, and sees his greatness. He knew very little of the universe compared with what we know. We look upon the earth, these rivers, these mountains, this ocean, we look back historically upon the tremendous forces which have pushed these continents up, and are pushing them, so that it is estimated that within the last five years Scandinavia has been pushed up over three hundred feet into the air from the ocean bed; we look upon the starry firmament with these immensities of space, and it will be very strange if we are not inclined to say, "What are we? Insects on a globe of sand; the world an ant-hill, and we but ants upon it." "Who am I, that I should think the Creator of these blazing orbs, the forth-putter of this tremendous power, the wisdom that has planned and keeps in order this marvellous mechanism—that He should count the hairs of my head, or think of me as His son?" Yet, if we think deeply, we shall come also to the thought of the Psalmist, and see in the very grandeur of nature a testimony to the grandeur of man. If we have learned something which the Psalmist never knew respecting the greatness of nature, we have learned something also which the Psalmist never knew concerning the greatness of man, for whom the world has been made. Not only has this wonderful world been given to us, not only has this wonderful world been mastered by us, but it has been given to us to find the way to the mastery of it ourselves. If you consider that this world is a university. All its powers are hidden from us until by our own energy we have discovered them, mastering us until by our own supremacy we have dominion over them; if you consider that all this has been given to us to make "character"—does it seem so strange that this world should be also the theatre of a more Divine redemption, the place whereon a greater service to character has been wrought than can be wrought by cloud, or tree, or mountain stream, or ocean? This world is not an ant-hill. It is God's house; it is man's house; God-given for man's use and man's supremacy. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*)

*Man and the universe.*—It is possible to measure man against the universe on more than one scale, and the result will be strikingly different according to the scale which we use. 1. The scale of space and time. How instantaneously, how inexpressibly, are we dwarfed by the result! What are we but microscopical insects, crawling in indistinguishable multitude upon the face of a planet, which, in comparison with the countless orbs of space, is itself no more than a grain of star-dust? We can reduce astronomical results to figures, but to all this the mind responds by no adequate effort of conception. So also it is with periods of time. I am not sure that we do not feel our littleness more when we think of the thousand millions of living beings on the earth now, and of the thousand times a thousand millions who have mouldered into its elemental dust. We may heap figure upon figure to express our physical insignificance, and we shall not find the level of our nothingness. 2. There is a radical distinction between man and the universe. It is a necessity of man's nature to divide the whole vast sum of things into two marvellously unequal parts—himself, and all that is not himself. The sense of personality, this discrimination between the I and the not I, is so strong and fundamental, that it requires, in most of us, an effort to take the other view, and to consider ourselves as a minute and undivided part of the whole. The moment you introduce the ideas of personality and consciousness, it becomes necessary to measure the relations between man and the universe on quite a new scale. Thought has no magnitude. When we apply the words greater and less to feeling, it is only by way of metaphor. Whatever lives the life of consciousness and reflection, though never so feebly, is separated by an immeasurable gulf from that which simply exists, unwitting of its own existence. This fact of reflective consciousness would seem strange and significant enough, if it implied no more than the power of simply cutting ourselves off from the universe,



and so recognising ourselves. But it becomes stranger and more significant still, when it is seen to involve the power of setting up the "I" over against the "All," and, weak, ignorant, transitory, as each one of us is, of distinctly comprehending the vast and complex totality of which we form a most minute and undistinguished part. Compare me with the universe on the physical side, and words are utterly powerless to express the inconceivable contrast of greatness and littleness. But think of one philosopher bringing into correlation to the same law the falling apple and the revolving worlds, and another reducing to theoretic uniformity the speed at which the planets circle in their courses, and a third demonstrating, with glass of new magic, the constituents of the solar atmosphere, and you will see how there can be no comparison between that which thinks and that which simply is. If, on the one hand, nature is our irresponsible tyrant, on the other, we are masters of nature. This is much more the case when we bring within our survey the moral element. How decisively this moral element differentiates man from nature. Take humanity out of the universe, and it is neither moral nor immoral, it is simply natural. The world of morals is emphatically human, and as emphatically *not* material. It is in connection with human morality alone that what I may call the moral indifference of nature receives some measure of explanation. There is a further sense, in which both man and the universe may be said to receive and reflect God, and so in this highest capacity of being to be again at one. And yet while this is so, at no point is the difference between them more radical; for the reflection of mind in matter is another and less thing than the reflection of mind in mind. The world reveals God without knowing Him: but man consciously receives God as a Divine guest, and feels His vivifying and purifying presence. The pure heart sees, and knows, and welcomes God. The keen conscience leaps up to answer His least command. The disciplined will submits, and rejoices in submission. The fine life lives in the Divine and eternal life, and is unspeakably content. (*C. Beard, B.A.*)

*The greatness and littleness of man:—I. THE ESTIMATE WE MAKE OF MAN'S PLACE IN GOD'S UNIVERSE DEPENDS UPON THE CRITERION BY WHICH WE JUDGE.* There is a sense in which, viewed as a physical force in the world of matter, man is nothing. II. IT BECOMES NECESSARY, THEREFORE, TO MEASURE MAN'S PLACE AND IMPORTANCE IN GOD'S UNIVERSE BY ALTOGETHER OTHER STANDARDS. 1. If we contemplate man simply as a being of intelligence, the scale begins to turn. The fact of a thinking mind in man puts him above sun and moon and stars. Mind is above matter, intelligence above force. 2. The importance of man in the universe is greatly heightened when we advance from the mental to the moral. "Two objects," said Kant, "fill my soul with ever-increasing admiration and respect—above us the starry heavens, within us the moral law." Man is a member of the kingdom of spirits. He is capable of virtue and of sin. He is a free being, capable of self-improvement and self-destruction. He can contend with his Maker. 3. Man as a sinner is of special importance. A creature who sins always makes himself of importance. An offending member of a family assumes a significance he did not have before. Viewed simply as a sinner, man looms up in the Divine government above the stars. 4. A sufferer is a being of importance in God's universe. He is worthy of God's thought and visitation. However feeble, and obscure in rank, if he suffers, and is liable to suffer for ever, he becomes of importance in the Divine government. 5. The crowning proof of man's greatness and worth must be taken from God's own estimate. That is found in the sacrifice that God has made to restore man to the high place from which he has fallen. The moon and the stars cost nothing—the redemption of the soul cost God's Only Begotten Son. Inferences: 1. The reasonableness of the fact that God is mindful of us. 2. The real greatness of man as a sinner lies in his penitence, contrition, confession. 3. If a man is worth so much to God, he surely ought to be of great value to himself. 4. If man is so important a creature as a sinner and a sufferer, how much more so as a Christian! (*James Brand, D.D.*)

*Vastness of the material universe:—*The contemplation of this must have immense power over the mind. The nightly vision of the starry heavens has three daughters, Religion, Superstition, Atheism. It is very important that believers in God should reason rightly. For Atheism is hastening to occupy the ground which Superstition long ago filled. If the mind of man were in unimpaired simplicity, the spectacle of the universe would teach him piety; but, being as he is, piety must be first imparted by other means. But being imparted, this vision of the heavens will be one chief means for aiding both his reason and imagination. For the heavens display the infinitude of God, and that infinitude filled with existence. They symbolise and demonstrate His

Divine attributes by the vastness and richness of His visible universe. Such is the doctrine of mind-reason. But if reason be corrupted, there follows Superstition, as in the East; or Atheism, as amongst modern scientific men. Bacon, who originated our modern philosophy, and Newton, who verified it,—the two minds who more than any other have ruled the world of mind,—both believed in the Supreme Intelligence which the material universe demonstrated. But it is otherwise with their successors. And that men of science should doubt disturbs many who cannot bear to think that the Divine existence should be called in question. They forget that all arguments other than those of the mathematician can be assailed again and again, and are always open to question. Only mathematical argument excludes, or can exclude, controversy. Further, it should be remembered that these men of science have elevated their abstract laws to the position of effectual causes of things, and so have set aside the first great Cause, and, in their minds, supplanted the higher truth. But there is another and more modest form of this same impiety, and which is derived from the contemplation of the vastness of the universe. This world and man are so insignificant that it is incredible that God should be mindful of him. But this false modesty will be confuted if we remember that the universe is composed of separate parts, and that the whole is but the vastness of accumulation. Our argument is briefly this: The material system, so far as it is open to our knowledge, surpasses all power of conception. Yet this immensity is but the immensity of matter; and we know by consciousness of an order of existence incomparably more excellent than matter, even in its most admirable combinations. It is probable, therefore, that this higher order of existence actually spreads itself over the entire surface of the material system, and is developing itself in some manner proportionate to its superior dignity. Hence the material universe, great as it is, may be nothing more than a stage for the accomplishment of the destinies of this higher order of existence. And concerning these destinies, we may infer from the ease and tranquillity of the messengers of heaven that all is well, if looked upon from a point sufficiently high. Just as when a father, stationed on an eminence, is watching the progress of his sons through a labyrinth, they may confidently presume that their course is the right one, so long as they see a cheerful smile on his face. And are we not taught modesty by this very vastness of the universe? What is our knowledge but that of a single spot? (*Isaac Taylor.*) *Wonders of grace in the height and in the depth*:—It is charged against earnest Christians that they are unable to see the wonders of God in the world; that from holding so rigidly to the letter of the Scripture, the taste has been lost for the Divine displays in the firmament and in the glory of earthly nature. It may be true of some, but where this is so it is opposed to Holy Scripture and to Christ Himself. Nowhere shall we find any hymns in which the glories of God in nature are more tenderly and devoutly celebrated than they are in these Psalms. So, then, let us meditate—**I. ON THE WONDERS OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE HEIGHTS ABOVE.** This Psalm is a night Psalm, called forth by the contemplation of the glory of the starry heavens. Wonderful is the scene which is opened to the eye when it looks from earth to heaven. Men need such a view. They would not then be quiet in having no certainty on earth concerning heavenly and eternal things. What wonders fill the heart when we look up into those distances of light. How free, how calm, how regular they are as they float in wide space—how innumerable. And are they empty, and what is their destiny? But if I have no other theatre of His grace than that one so infinite I can call Him the Infinite, but the name of Father dies away on my lips. What is man when compared with immensity? The greatness of God crushes our hearts if we look only at the wonders in the heights above, and the expression of amazed and humble thanksgiving is also the language of doubt. “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” Let us, then, hasten on, that in the infinite we may see the Father, to consider—**II. THE WORKS OF GOD’S GRACE IN THE DEPTHS BELOW.** They throw light upon His works of grace in the heights above. There are two kingdoms in which our Lord and God reigns upon earth: 1. The kingdom of nature. Now, would it not take away from His glory if His creative power had called forth so many worlds in the immensity above us, but His preserving and sustaining power could not keep pace with it? If the eye which guides the four thousand nebulae could not see the falling tear which is wept upon this little earth? But it is not so. The microscope, when the telescope was discovered to support human doubt, seems to have come into existence to meet that doubt. And by its means we find the infinitude of God in every flying straw and in the smallest grain. None can say where God is greater, in the great or in the

little, in the immensity on earth or in the infinity in heaven. But if the flying straw and gnat display His wonderful works, what will He not have done in and for man? Man has a spirit which can think and soar and worship. But though it can soar to heaven, it brings down no certain news. I see the heavens full of stars, and man's heart of anticipations and forebodings. Yes, these are the only relics which man has rescued from the Fall. And no philosopher can still those longings and forebodings. But are they for ever to remain unsatisfied? No, for see—

2. The kingdom of grace. Man, without Christ, might have expected that the Divine wonder-working power would show itself in and for his spirit more than in the flowers of the field. He needs it so much, but knows not the way of life. God, who feeds the ravens and gives food to the young eagles, was He not to have taken care to feed man's heart? Yes, for the Saviour came, God manifest in the flesh. And the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest," &c. So on the whole earth weary, heavy-laden men have ever since drunk of the water of life which quenches the thirst for ever. (*J. Tholuck.*) *Night thoughts*:—How cometh he to mention the moon and the stars, and omit the sun? the other being but his pensioners, shining with that exhibition of light which the bounty of the sun allots them. It is answered, this was David's night meditation, when the sun, departing to the other world, left the lesser lights only visible in the heavens; and as the sky is best beheld by day in the glory thereof, so, too, it is best surveyed by night in the variety of the same. Night was made for man to rest in. But when I cannot sleep may I, with the Psalmist, entertain my waking with good thoughts. (*Thomas Fuller.*) *God's stars and their message*:—An atheistic leader of the French Revolution said one day to a Christian villager, "We are going to pull down your church tower, so that you may have nothing left to remind you of God or religion." "You will not only have to pull down the church tower," said the man, "you will also have to blot out the stars, before you can destroy all that reminds us of God; they speak to us of Him." (*W. Walters.*) *Work of God's fingers*:—This is most elaborate and accurate; a metaphor from embroiderers, or from them that make tapestry. (*John Trapp.*) *What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?—What is man?*—The influence on religious faith and hope of what we call "nature"—of the sun and the moon, the stars, the mountains, and the seas—varies with different men, and varies with the varying temper and mood of the same man at different times. There are some aspects of nature which sometimes make it difficult to believe that there can be any real communion between the Creator and ourselves. Those of us who live in great cities are perhaps especially sensitive to the austere influences of the material universe. If we perished, what difference would it make to this stupendous universe? Ages ago David felt the insignificance of man when compared with the greatness of God's material works, and expressed it in the words of our text. Our humiliation is deepened by the discovery that our own life is kin to the inferior forms of life around us. In the very highest there still survive affinities with the lowest. What right have I to claim a different rank? The Most High appears to take no heed of the moral qualities of men, or of their weakness and helplessness. What right, it may be urged, have we to claim any special remembrance from Him? This is the gospel of science. Is it true, or is it false? The truth in it David had a glimpse of. But instead of yielding to the grovelling fear, David triumphed over it, turning with exulting confidence to his assurance that, after all, God is mindful of us, that God doth visit us. What are these pleas worth? 1. We are told the whole world in which we live is a mere speck in the universe, and it is incredible that God can have a special care for it. But there is a certain intellectual and moral vulgarity in attaching such importance to mere material magnitude. 2. The life of man is too brief and momentary compared with the ages during which the universe has existed. But science itself contains the reply to this argument. All these ages have been necessary in order to render it possible for a creature like man to come into existence. 3. We are encompassed by laws which take no heed of the personal differences of men, of the varieties of their character, or of the vicissitudes of their condition. To ask God to deal with us separately and apart is to forget that He guides the whole universe by laws which are fixed, irreversible, and irresistible. But this too is a fact, I am conscious of a power of choice—of moral freedom. That must be taken into the account. You tell me of law, but there is another law, the law of my moral nature. I am not absolutely bound by the chains of necessity in my moral life. In the centre and heart of my being I am free. Separated from nature, I may be akin to God. As for those modern thinkers



who deny the moral freedom of man, they are engaged in a hopeless struggle. Their controversy is not with philosophy or with religion, it is with the human race. The whole history of mankind is the proof of man's consciousness. So long as in our moral life we know that we are free we can look up into the face of the living God with the hope that He will deal with us separately and apart, that He Himself will care for us, and that there may be direct communion between us and Him. (R. W. Dale, M.A.)

*Man, what is he?*—This language of the Psalmist shows that there were two facts in his mind that had settled down as undebatable convictions. The first is, that God is the Creator and Proprietor of the heavens. "Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers." He was neither Atheist, Polytheist, nor Pantheist. The second is, that God pays special regard to His creature man. "Thou art mindful of him," &c. Now with these two facts in his mind, he studied; "considered" the heavens. A wonderful study are these heavens! Who can compute the number of yon flaming orbs? Think of their infinite variety. No two alike. Think of the swiftness and regularity of their revolutions. What is man? I. NEGATIVELY. He does not mean to imply that man constitutionally is a contemptible being—a creature too insignificant for notice. The very next verse shows that he could not mean that, for he says, Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, &c. Man is an immortal intelligence, and therefore great. He does not mean that man is insignificant in comparison with the heavens. The heavens are incapable of studying their Maker; man can. The heavens have no power of self-modification—they cannot move slower or faster, grow brighter or dimmer, of their own accord; man can. The heavens will not continue their identity for ever. "The stars shall fade away," &c.; but man will abide. 3. He does not mean to imply that there is a probability of man being overlooked amidst the immensity of God's works. 4. He does not mean that it is essentially inconsistent with God's greatness for Him to notice man. This cannot be entertained. Great and small are relative terms to creatures only. To the Infinite they have no meaning. II. POSITIVELY. What, then, does he mean? 1. The great sentiment in his mind at the time was undoubtedly the infinite condescension of the great Creator and Proprietor of the heavens. This condescension would impress him as he thought of man as a spiritual creature. 2. This condescension would impress him much more as he thought upon him as a mortal creature, a creature only of a day, "who cometh forth as a flower and is cut down," &c. 3. This condescension would impress him most of all as he thought upon man as a sinful creature—ungrateful, disobedient, rebellious. (*Homilist.*)

*The subject of religion—the soul.*—Religion is the maintenance of a real bond between God and the individual man. Its object is God, but its subject is the soul. I. WHAT IS THE SOUL? Man is not his accidents; not those things with which we associate him when we speak of any one man. But he is a person—something separate and distinct from all others, and whose identity can be traced, year after year, all through life. And of all this we are conscious. The lower animals do not possess this sense of personality. But man is a personal spirit, separate from all others. Now, this consciousness is not the result of our physical constitution. Thought, after all, is not merely phosphorus. But we are conscious of the spirituality of the soul. The Bible takes it for granted, and appeals to it. Christ cares not for the outward, but for the spirit of a man. And because we have this soul we are capable of religion. But—II. WHENCE COMES THIS SOUL? There are the ideas—1. Of the East, which tell of the transmigration of souls. 2. Of the West—especially of Plato—which teach that the soul has had a former existence, and is here as a penalty for former sin. This doctrine travelled to Alexandria, is found in Philo, and in the Talmud, and in the Gnostics. 3. The Church opposed it, for it has no basis in Scripture; it contradicts the doctrine of original sin, which tells that its consequences devolve on those who had not sinned as Adam had. And it is equally at variance with the account of the Creation, which teaches the simultaneous creation of both soul and body. And experience is against it. We have no memory of such pre-existence. 4. Whence, then, came the soul? Is it begotten by the parents? Tertullian and Augustine leant to this view, the latter finding in it explanation of the transmission of sin. But when Lactantius asked, "From which parent came the soul, or was it from both?" no answer could be found. And, as a fact, the child resembles the parent in temperament, that which is of the body, but not in genius or will. Is the soul, then, created by an immediate act of God? In favour of this is the consideration that so the truth of the spirituality of the soul is maintained, and of the simul-

aneous creation of both. But against it it is urged—(i) That God ceased creation on the seventh day. But, in reply, we have new species of animals. (ii) That it binds the Creator to create a human soul at the will of man, perhaps an adulterer. But man cannot sin without Divine assistance. He is dependent for everything. (iii) That there can be no transmission of sin. But sin is a defect of the soul rather than a positive quality. Therefore, on the whole, the creative theory is to be preferred. And it agrees emphatically with the Scripture distinction between the “fathers of our flesh” and the “Father of our spirits.” But both teach that God creates the soul. Then—III. WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL? Some say, “We cannot tell; the dead return not.” But when death comes near us this reply will not serve. We cannot believe that our loved ones cease to be. The moral argument is, after all, the strongest. Justice demands a future state. Is the soul’s growth to stop? The Bible takes the truth for granted. The doctrine of Sheol, the sayings of the prophets, the heroism of the Maccabees all countenance this truth. We have the resurrection of Christ as the great argument for the resurrection of the body as well as of the soul. Both are necessary to complete life. IV. RELIGION IS BASED ON THE SENSE OF IMMORTALITY. It is impossible without it. Suicide would be reasonable, and, indeed, has been advocated as wise. Seneca contends for it, but the Church by her teaching of the value of each soul counteracted all such views. Our main business, therefore, is to save our soul. (*H. P. Liddon, D.D.*) *Immortality*:—The Psalm reveals not the littleness, but the greatness of man. One of the most plausible of the objections of unbelief has been the attempt to prove fallacious the prospects which Christianity offers to men beyond this world. Consider, then, the Christian idea of an immortal and heavenly life hereafter. It is this which is imperilled. I take the Psalm before us as furnishing a triumphant and lasting reply to the kind of unbelief in question. In nature, first, God shows us His estimate of man. The ascent is easy from nature to grace, in which the Divine estimate is raised to its highest point. Was not everything the earth contains made for our use and enjoyment, in measure increasing with every new discovery? We are invited to look still further afield. This world, which is made for us, is not independent or alone. It is in no sense self-sustained. It is part of a wonderful and incomprehensible whole. Other great creations concur in its maintenance. The whole host of heaven has been brought into co-ordinate and helpful relation to it—yes, *it*, the world, exists for us! When I consider the manifold bearings of Thy universe upon man—what is man? We do not say that we are the only moral and spiritual beings in the midst of so many worlds. But we do say—and science combines with Scripture to compel us to say—that these worlds have been in part created for us, just as our world has been in part created for them. So much, then, for what nature teaches. The first step being taken, another follows. Man is an object of the manifold agencies of myriads of worlds. He is so as man; and the relative position he holds, intellectually, morally, or socially, to his fellow-men has nothing to do with the fact. Nature ministers to the Caffre and the Hottentot as truly as to the man of most advanced civilisation. Why, then, should man refuse to believe that he is an object of solicitous love to that God who created him, who made him what he is, and who thus crowned him with glory and honour? The prospect of human destiny as opened up by Christianity is grand; but not too grand to be ascribed to Him who created the universe, and so arranged it that it should constitute one vast system of ministration to us. Try from the greatness of man to estimate the greatness of the end. Is eternal life too much for a being whom the worlds combine to sustain, to feed, and to bless? Is a heaven of holiness and of love too much for a being whom angels are delighted to protect? It may be objected that this is a low and selfish view to take of the matter. But remember that the grandeur of our destiny is not determined and measured by our merits, but by the immensity of the Divine goodness. The eternal and blessed life which we anticipate is not of reward, but of grace; not a payment, but a gift. (*Clement Bailhache.*) *The end of man*:—This text teaches more than the condescension of God. The Psalmist has been contemplating the starry heavens. Now he turns his observation on himself, apparently mean and insignificant, and perceives that he is the object of God’s special and distinguishing care. What is man, for what purpose is he intended, that he fills so large a space in the Divine regard? I. THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. God never acts without a purpose. His great purpose is His own glory. The Divine care of man exhibits His goodness; but even Divine goodness is not without a purpose, for it is a form of the

Divine wisdom. The universe is one. One law governs and unites all, and each is contributive to it. The earth is part of a system of worlds. Though each part is necessary to the whole, there are those which occupy more important places in the great economy, not, doubtless, from any intrinsic excellence in themselves, but the ordination of God. In God's moral universe His higher glories are displayed, because there He manifests His moral attributes. The character of individuals not only makes up the aggregate character of a nation and the world, but they affect each other; while each is employed and controlled for the one grand purpose of created beings. The moral kingdom of God is extensive. There are intelligent beings peopling other worlds than this. There must be, in the moral government of God, the same certainty and universality of principles, and a harmony and connection of the various portions, all being controlled to effect the one purpose of the glory of God. There must be, in this moral universe, influences more powerful than others, and objects which attract in an especial manner the notice and contemplation of the rest. What these are we may infer from the manner in which God regards them. II. THE DEALINGS OF GOD TOWARDS MAN. Mark the circumstances of his creation. With what pomp and circumstance is he ushered into the world. But what are the wonders of his creation compared with the glories of his redemption? Man is the occasion and object of an attribute whose blessing the fallen angel never enjoyed, and which the holy angel had never before beheld exhibited, the Divine mercy. For his complete redemption the wonderful means of grace are instituted, and made effectual by the vivifying and resistless energies of the Holy Ghost. The subject of man's redemption is that into which the angels desire to look. There is much taught us in this brief expression. Those angelic students have large experience in the investigation of the Divine glory. Again we ask, What is man? It is the purpose of God to display in him His chiefest glory. Therefore man holds a place of so great importance in the universe of God. Application: 1. How grateful should we be for this distinguishing grace of God. 2. What manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness! 3. How certain is the triumph of the Church. 4. Impenitent man, God is mindful of you. (*The Evangelist.*) *The meanness and the greatness of man:*—Could any paradox be imagined greater than this—this contrast between the insignificance of man's self and the pre-eminence of man's destiny? No interval of time or transference of scene, no contrast of persons or of circumstances, has tarnished its freshness or robbed it of its power. Nay, must we not rather confess that, as the world has grown older, the chasm between the greatness and the meanness of man has widened, and the paradox has increased from age to age? I. EACH NEW DISCOVERY HAS DEPRESSED THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF MAN IN THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE. 1. Astronomy has taught us our insignificance in space. 2. Geology teaches us our insignificance in time. 3. The microscope discovers to us miniature worlds, crowding under our eyes, countless in number, and each thronged with a dense population of its own. 4. The anatomist dissects and the chemist analyses the human body. Man is found to be compounded of just such substances as the brute, the tree, the stone. There is absolutely nothing besides. 5. If there is nothing in the component elements of the human frame which accounts for the pre-eminence of man, we may at all events look for an explanation in some peculiarities of structure. But the naturalist will tell us that all attempts at classification with a view to separating man off by a broad line from the lower creation fail signally. II. THE MATERIALIST WILL BE CONTENT TO SAY, "WHAT IS MAN? An insignificant atom in time and space. And the son of man? An organism like other organisms." But the believer is constrained to add, "Lord, that Thou art mindful of him! Lord, that Thou visitest him!" 1. The believer may boldly claim science herself as his teacher, for it has accumulated evidence at every step that, as a thinking, hoping, aspiring, progressive being he is quite unique in God's creation. The Psalmist thought of man's dominion over the beasts, birds, fishes of the sea. We have lived to witness his sovereignty over the elemental powers of nature—he can order the lightning, weigh the sun, make the vapour his slave. 2. Yet this subjugation of the powers of nature is only the earnest of greater things to come. Apostles and evangelists saw the true fulfilment of the Psalmist's prophetic saying in the ultimate and supreme destiny of mankind, as realised in the person and work of the one representative Man. The song of the Psalmist falls on the ears of Christians now with a fuller cadence, swelled with the experience of nearly thirty centuries, and prolonged into the hopes of eternity. (*Bishop Lightfoot.*) *Man's study of himself:*—I. FINE ANIMAL ORGANISM. Perfect machine; every part



adapted ; power to repair itself, and reproduce its kind. "Fearfully and wonderfully made." II. INTELLECTUAL BEING. Animal organism of little value aside from this. To answer text, see intellectual giants: Paul, Cæsar, Shakespeare, Newton. III. SPIRITUAL BEING. Man created after grand plan: "Let us make man in our own image." Traces of grandeur in fallen man. IV. IMMORTAL BEING. This soul, in glorified body, shall go on for ever. Were death the end, life would be unexplainable. V. RESPONSIBLE BEING. Life is not chance ; nor is the hereafter. We give account of our powers. We shall face our Maker. Tomorrow is the judgment. These facts should not oppress us, but lead us, by God's help, to make our lives the best answer to the text. (*Homiletic Review.*) *God's idea of man* :—Considered as part of nature, man is insignificant. As a product of nature, man seems to possess a higher dignity. He is the last result of the vast system of forces that play about him. Apart from man, apart from the consciousness and reason that are his attributes, the glory of the visible universe has little meaning. Yet man must still seem insignificant when measured by the highest standard. Man's opinion of his own importance and inherent dignity has fluctuated, because he is moved by feeling. His thought has ever vibrated between two opposite conceptions of himself. To-day, in the fulness of his energy, he fancies himself the noblest of beings and the measure of all things. To-morrow, in a moment of weakness and humiliation, he becomes conscious of the hollowness of this high pretence, and confesses to himself his utter incapacity to comprehend the simplest facts of his own being. I. GOD HAS REVEALED THAT MAN IS THE RESULT OF A SPECIAL CREATION. There are two processes by which finite existences come to be. One is that of evolution ; the other is that of creation. The Biblical description of man's origin plainly teaches that man was created, not evolved. The interval between the highest brute intelligence and the rational soul of the lowest man is so wide and impassable a gulf that all but the most extreme and immoderate theorists find need to suppose the intervention of a sublime life-giving power that transcended all previously existing natures in bestowing upon man a rational soul. II. GOD HAS REVEALED THAT MAN IS A SPIRITUAL BEING. We have, in consciousness, a witness that helps us to comprehend the conception of man as a spiritual being. We find in the animals a consciousness of feeling, but not a consciousness of self. Not one of them gives evidence of this knowledge of personality which we all possess. From it our actions radiate, and for our actions we are justly held responsible. III. GOD HAS REVEALED THAT MAN WAS CREATED IN HIS IMAGE. God is a person. God is free ; and it is in the possession of freedom that man is in His image—after His likeness. The image of God which men now possess is an imperfect one. By the image of God a "vital" likeness is intended ; a likeness that has its source in a community of life. Man is God's image, and God would not have His image marred. (*David J. Hill, LL.D.*) *Man's dignity* :—We regard the entire Psalm as descriptive of man's dignity and importance, which is at once seen in the exalted position he occupies in the realm of nature, and in the Divine system of revelation with which God in His love has blessed him. I. HIS DIGNITY APPEARS FROM THE HOME IN WHICH HE DWELLS. As we look upon this great world in which we live, upon the heavens robed in majesty and glory, we cannot but recognise man's superior excellence and importance. We may well exclaim, "Whence all this weight of magnificence—this perfect arrangement and adaptation ? Whence this fulness of provision, and this unbounded wealth of beauty and of blessing !" The world, with all its immense surroundings, finds its only explanation for its existence, and the realisation of its loftiest designs, in the presence and requirements of man. II. MAN'S DIGNITY IS FURTHER MANIFESTED FROM A SURVEY OF HIS PHYSICAL NATURE. As we glance at the construction of the human frame we cannot fail to notice the amazing wisdom and power therein displayed. It teems with marks of purpose and intelligent design. There is nothing like it in all the variations in the material world. It is the crown and coronation of all the physical creations, and the masterpiece of Divine wisdom and skill. The make-up of the human body has ever been a matter of wonder to the thoughtful mind. Science also tells us that influences from the vast regions of outlying space are ever playing upon man, and affecting him physically, more or less, continually. III. WHEN WE PASS FROM MAN'S OUTWARD NATURE TO HIS INTELLECTUAL, HIS SUPERIORITY IS MORE FULLY SEEN. Man is distinguished in the scale of being by thought. It is this which lifts him above the brute creation, and constitutes him an active, intelligent, and responsible agent. It is the possession of this princely power to think that places him on the very throne of material

beings, in his hand the sceptre of dominion and on his brow the crown of a possible and glorious destiny. Man can comprehend many of the mighty laws which are ever operating in the vast realms of matter and of mind. Think for a moment of the rapidity of thought: time and space are both annihilated by it. Consider the amazing power of thought: man, by the exercise of his thinking faculty, is transforming the entire face of nature, and emancipating her mighty and long-kept secrets. By the application and exercise of his thought man is becoming the perfect master of the world in which he lives. Never did mind wield such a kingly power over matter as at present. IV. IT IS, HOWEVER, IN HIS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL NATURE WHERE HIS IMPORTANCE IS MOST FULLY DISPLAYED. It was in this respect, chiefly, that man was created in the image of his Maker. It is the soul that makes man the most precious being in this lower world. V. WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR HIM. When we look at this we feel as if our former remarks have only led us to the threshold of this theme. In the Bible all the possibilities of man's being are foreseen, and all his wants and actualities are fully provided for. (*W. Harrison.*) *Man's kinship to God*:—The Psalmist reminds us that, although little in himself, he is Divine in his origin, and though weak and frail in his present life, he is capable of a glorious future, and that future God has in store for him. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, and crownedst him with glory and worship." The literal meaning of the words is still more striking. Thou madest him a little lower—or a little less—than God. He does not answer his own question, but he reminds us of this important factor in the inquiry, which must not be left out of view. It is this fact in our history which it is so needful to remember, and yet so easy to forget, amid the din and strain of our daily life. It is hardly possible for us to escape from the remembrance of our littleness and our weakness. In the straitened condition of this mortal life, both as regards our physical powers and our intellectual attainments, how little, after all, we can do, how little, after all, we can know! But how easy it is to forget that we are made a little lower than the angels, a little less than God, to live unmindful of our high calling as the children of God, unmindful of the splendid destiny which lies within our reach. Yet it is in the remembrance of this fact that our moral strength can alone be found. The contemplation of our weakness and our littleness, the frailty of the perishing body, the instability of the mental powers, the fiveness of our passing years, the shortcomings of our best endeavours, the insufficiency of what we accomplish compared with what we purpose and desire,—all this might well suggest to us a philosophy of despair. But the thought of our high origin and our glorious destiny awakens and fosters in us the religion of hope. And so the Psalmist asks, What is man? Thou madest him a little less than God. It is this which the record of creation tells us in another form, that God made man in His own image. It is perhaps impossible for us fully to understand the scope and meaning of these wonderful words, "made in God's image," "a little less than God." The greatest of our theologians have given to them very different interpretations, as they have sought to discover and to define those powers and faculties in man which appear to reveal in him the traces of the Divine image. But whatever else the words may mean, they clearly assure us that there is in every man something that is akin to God, something which separates him from all other creatures on the face of the earth, something which makes it possible for him to think of God, to know God, and to love God. In this, at least, we find the special prerogative of humanity, that which distinguishes and differentiates man from all the lower orders of creation. The patient labours of science are unfolding to us day by day new and beautiful mysteries in the world of nature, with fuller knowledge of the marvels of animal life, and of seeming intelligence even in the tiniest of God's creatures; but no trace is found of anything akin to this capacity of man, this high endowment of humanity—the power to know his Maker and to do that Maker's will. These are the highest capacities which belong to human nature, even in their possession, but still more in their use. It is in these unparalleled gifts that man's true greatness lies. There is nothing more great, nothing more noble, nothing more beautiful within the reach of humanity than to know with a personal affection the Being to whom we owe our existence, to be able to understand something of the working of His Divine power and love, to sympathise with the holiness and purity of His nature, still more to make efforts after attaining to some measures of that purity and that holiness in ourselves. These are at once the privileges and the responsibilities that belong to our humanity, the outcome of that love of God which breathed into us something of His own Divine nature, and gave us the germ

of a Divine life. It is true, as the Psalmist reminds us, that man is like a thing of naught, that his time passeth away as a shade. It is not less true that He who made us made us in His own image, a little less than Himself, to crown us with glory and worship. This is the paradox of humanity—man's high origin, and man's humble estate. So Pascal exclaims, "Oh, the grandeur and the littleness, the excellency and the corruption, the majesty and the meanness of man." (*Archbishop Thompson.*) *What is man?*—Is he but a bodily organism? Is he a duality, body and mind united together? Is he a trinity in unity, having a material frame, a connecting life principle, and an immortal spirit? We know nothing of mind-force except through its material manifestations. Voltaire said, "The welfare of a nation often depends on the good or bad digestion of its prime minister"; and Mr. Motley avers that "The gout of Charles V. may have changed the destinies of mankind." Our mental and emotional states rise and fall with our bodily conditions, as the tides with the moon. How often does bodily decay seem to be mental decay. In answer to the question, What is man? the materialistic and semi-materialistic schools give various answers. "Man is but a thinking machine," says one. Feuerbach declares that "The soul is but the sum-total of nervous processes." In another place he says, "It is but a dust heap, to be dispersed as it was swept together." Zoust asserts that "Man's acts are the result of his organisation." Another maintains that "The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile." Moleschhoff avers that "Thought is a motion of matter." Büchner, that "Mental activity is a function of the cerebral substance. It is emitted by the brain as thoughts are by the mouth, as music by the organ." There is, however, one truth we must face; there is a will constituting the self-hood of each person, absolutely uncontrolled, but controlling all bodily conditions. It is a will separable in thought and fact from the material organism in which it finds its play and manifestation. I find no better answer to the question, What is man? than that contained in Scripture, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (*Samuel Fellows, D.D.*) *The greatness of man:*—Man seems to occupy a middle position in the universe. If in respect of his physical organisation he resembles the lower animals, over whom he undoubtedly wields a superior force, in respect of his moral and rational nature he resembles God, the crown and summit of all being. One of the special characteristics of man is self-consciousness. Attribute as you like all individual acts to some chemical or physiological causes, how do you account for the fact that at the bottom of all these individual acts a man is conscious of himself as centre and bond of union of all these acts? What is it which each one of us means when he says "I"? We mean something utterly distinct from all that is not I, something which is profoundly conscious of this deep distinctness. I think, and I know that it is only I who think. I think about myself, and I know that it is myself only about whom I am thinking. I am conscious of my own identity and of my utter separateness from all besides. I trace and assert this separateness and personal identity for any long period of years. When the outward circumstances of my life were quite different from what they are now, when my bodily shape and form were so different that none who had known me earlier could recognise me now, when I had completely other thoughts and feelings and pursuits than I have now; when I was a little child and a schoolboy I was essentially the same as I am now. The thoughts of my mind are my thoughts; the acts of my will are my will. I am the ruler who disposes all other manifold instruments of my nature. This reflective self-conscious faculty is wanting in the beast. Traces of a faculty like memory are indeed found in the beast, formed by a repetition of sensations, but this does not ascend to the higher human faculty of forming an objective notion of sensations and feelings, and therefore the beast has no language, properly so called. He can utter inarticulate sounds, expressive of pleasure and pain; he cannot, like man, compare and generalise, and communicate rational thought by the vehicle of speech. What a paradox to put man on a level with the brute! What is the value and dignity of all the knowledge which has been acquired by the animal portion of the universe since it first came into distinct being? Where is it treasured up? What improvements has it undergone? What ameliorations of condition has it caused? But compare this weakness and non-progressiveness with man as the interpreter of nature, and its lord by knowledge and power. Consider even the present grandeur of human knowledge. Man penetrates into the nature of things, and investigates their hidden causes. He transposes into mental images the things perceived by the senses: he passes beyond



the limits of sensuous impressions into the world of rational thought, and thus grasps the eternal truth underlying the perishable. His knowledge here indeed is but partial, but it contains within itself a prophecy of future perfection. Think, moreover, how the whole world without man is reflected in man, and is reproduced by the various forms of art in painting, music, poetry, sculpture—illuminated, beautified, spiritualised, transfigured. Man's imitative art is a resemblance of the Creator's power. It has been irreverently asserted by an atheistic writer that the heavens no longer declare the glory of God, but of Newton and Laplace. The glory of the astronomer who can measure the courses of the heavenly bodies and calculate the forces of the universe is really only another witness to the glory of the Creator, for He who framed the heavens framed also the understanding of the philosophic man, by which he was enabled to ascertain the laws regulating their motions. To man belong also—if we may trust the verdict of a psychology grounded upon actual facts of consciousness—personality and free will. He is not a mere automaton pushed and pulled by external forces over which he exercises no control. All sense of moral obligation demands as a postulate free will—all praise or blame of others are based upon the same hypothesis. The universal testimony of mankind, when not biassed by the desire of conforming to any paradoxical theory, would declare that we do not call a man good or bad in the same way as we should a tree, or a plant, or a dog. Man we believe to be himself a cause of action. The motives by which man acts are, after all, only influences, not compulsions. We are conscious that there is a wide distinction between the influence of a motive, and anything which might be fairly called restraint. We know within ourselves that in yielding to a motive, that is to say, in resolving in conformity with it, we are able to refrain from forming this resolve. We are free to be fools and to be vicious, only we prefer to be rational and to be virtuous. (*W. Ince, M.A.*) *Science humiliating man*:—The view which glorifies the dignity and value of human nature and points its aspirations forward is challenged in our time by an important school of thinkers. Science, whose moral characteristics have often been reproached as pride and self-conceit, preaches aloud from professorial chairs the lesson of humility, and, echoing the precept "Know thyself," bids man lay aside as a false illusion the fond imagination that he has a place in creation superior to the brute. Man is represented as an improved animal or vegetable, differentiated in the long course of ages from earlier forms of life by a more perfect organisation and a more complete adaptation to his surroundings, but not superior in essence or endowed with higher hopes than the rudimentary organised beings who have preceded him in the gradual development of the universe. The accurate observations of physiology and biology have traced out numerous marks of likeness of organs between man and these earlier organisms, which we have been accustomed to call lower. Rudimentary inchoate forms of the mechanism of the human body have been noticed in the irrational beings, and man is pronounced to differ from the despised ape not more than the cultivated European of our day from the barbarous native of the Admiralty Islands. On observed facts a theory is based, claiming to be covered by the facts in accordance with the strictest methods of induction, that there has been going on through countless ages of the universe a development from one primordial seed of insect, and animal, and man, through endless varieties of sub-species, each slightly deviating from and improving upon its predecessor in the series, until man, the latest result of evolution, appeared upon the earth. The old theory of final causes and foreseen adaptations of organs to their purposes we are told must be abandoned, and a doctrine of types of form must be substituted for a wise and benevolent will underlying the material universe. We may fear lest imagination should carry us into inferences which the organs of experience cannot verify. We may listen respectfully to all the analogies and homologies revealed to us by the biologist, and yet pause in the immediate acceptance of a provisional hypothesis of one uninterrupted evolution exclusive of any specific acts of creation, when the geologist tells us that he can discover few (if any) traces of these thousands upon thousands of varieties and sub-species which the hypothesis postulates, and we may feel a natural difficulty in understanding how the present phenomena of life have been produced by the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence, when we observe that the alleged earlier and lower types still exist side by side with the later and higher. If man, to use the poet's metaphor, is in his moral progress still working out the tiger and the ape, the tiger and the ape still hold their place in the animal world, and are not extinct species. Man has not survived, but is contemporary with them. A layman also may be at liberty to

note that natural science does not speak with unanimous voice either on the facts or the speculative theories of the origin of man. Great names are ranged on either side of the controversy. Biology cannot claim a monopoly and exclusive privilege in the discussion of the great problems of anthropology, psychology, and theology; history and philosophy are entitled to be heard. They maintain that there are moral and spiritual facts in man's nature over and beyond those physical facts which fall within the range of natural science, and these cannot be overlooked, but must be fully taken into account if we would attempt an adequate answer to the question, What is man? (*Ibid.*) *The Jewish and the Christian thought of man:*—I. THE JEWISH CONCEPTION OF MAN. It involved—1. Similarity of nature to that of God Himself. He must have understood that man finds his true and proper life, his human heritage—even as God does—in the thoughts which visit his mind, in the choices which proceed from his will, in the feelings which glow within his heart, in moral activities and spiritual enjoyment. 2. Likeness of character to the Divine. The Jew held that man had once walked with God on noble heights of wisdom and righteousness, and that, having fallen from these, it was his true aspiration to regain those spiritual levels, and live again the life which is pure, holy, heavenly, Divine. 3. A share in Divine authority. God has given to His human children a share in His wide rule. 4. Divine interest and attention. To the lowly it is much to enjoy the notice of the strong and high. 5. Privilege of approach to the Most High. Man is one who might “walk with God,” as did Enoch; be the “friend of God,” as was Abraham. Having this thought of the dignity of man, the Jew had an equally clear view of—6. His real degradation and misery. For the two truths stand or fall together. The Jew, recognising man's moral freedom and spiritual obligation, saw clearly and felt keenly the character of his low estate; he knew the touch and smarted under the sting of sin. II. THE DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN VIEW. What has Christ added to our thought about ourselves? 1. He has led us to take the highest view of our spiritual nature. Man, like God, is a spirit; his corporeal frame being only a frame. 2. He has drawn aside the veil from the future, and made that long life and that large world our own. The Jew hardly knew what to think about the future. 3. He taught us to think of ourselves as sinners who may have a full restoration to their high estate. By His words of love and by His work of mercy He summons us to return, to believe, to rejoice; to walk in the favour, to live in the love, to dwell in the home, to be transformed into the likeness of the Father of our spirits. (*William Clarkson, B.A.*) *On the condescension and goodness of God to man:*—1. The meanness of man, and his unworthiness of the regard and affection of the Most High God. Whenever man singles out one of his fellow-creatures with peculiar regard, it is on account of some amiable or useful quality he supposes him to possess; his powers to entertain and communicate pleasure, his benevolence of disposition, his strict integrity, or his ability to grant protection and to confer benefits. These form the ordinary basis upon which esteem is built. There must be suitableness and correspondence between the persons allied in friendship. In vain, however, shall we look to these several sources of esteem to account for that regard which God has been pleased to entertain for man. When we survey man, and compare him with the Divine Being, there appears everything which would tend to break the bonds of union. I do not here set before you the intellectual meanness of man, or the scanty and limited nature of his powers and faculties; though these might seem an insurmountable obstacle to union. There are more serious obstacles to an union between him and a Holy God. Man is a depraved and sinful as well as a weak creature. There prevails in him not merely a darkness with respect to spiritual things, but a dislike to them. It must be admitted, indeed, that there are remains of dignity in man which sometimes break forth and show his original. To know what man is, we ought not to consider of what he is capable under circumstances peculiarly favourable, but to look at him as he generally is. 2. Contemplate the nature of the great and glorious God, and judge how unlikely it is that He should be “mindful of man,” or visit him. How little are we acquainted with the Divine nature. Though we cannot tell what He is, we can say what He is not. Consider a Being who, full and complete in Himself, needs no addition, and feels no want, a Being who knows all things, embraces the past, the present, the future, in one comprehensive glance. All nations before Him are nothing. “Wherein, then, is man to be accounted of?” Then the peculiar attribute of God is holiness. How abominable, then, is man, who “drinketh in iniquity like water”! God is just. Will not this form an eternal separation between man and God? True, when we

consider God only in the light of the most benevolent of beings, and man in the character of the most wretched, we may discover some reason why God should thus regard and visit His creatures; for there is an attraction between benevolence and misery. But then mere benevolence could be supposed to extend only to the relief of absolute necessity, or deliverance from immediate danger. No principles of common benevolence are sufficient to explain the gracious acts of God to man. Consider, then, the nature of God's benevolence. 1. "Mindful of him" is not merely opposed to "forgetting him." God cannot forget any of His creatures. The word means, God keeps man constantly in view, ever watching over him, and never ceasing to do him good. 2. "Visit him." This expression supposes more than mere care or providence. It implies a degree of union and regard which may well excite our surprise. A man is said to visit another when he comes to him in order to cultivate friendship and love. Illustrate by God's coming to dwell in the Temple at Jerusalem; by the incarnation of the Only-begotten Son; by the providential dispensations of God; by gracious support and comforting in the trying seasons of life. (*John Venn, M.A.*) *The contradictions in human nature*:—In unfolding the contradictions of our nature we shall speak of man as a being endowed with reason, a moral being, a being impelled by longings for happiness. In these three particulars we shall discover in him, side by side, the grandeur and the meanness of his nature. 1. How great is man in his intellectual powers, in his capacity to know, to do, to design, and carry out a purpose! He understands and fulfils the will of God, which calls him to life in society. The tie of kindred not only binds together a few in smaller circles, but nations shape themselves into one grander whole, a great and glorious combination in which the individual serves the whole, and the whole the individual. From wise deliberation result laws, which are administered with wisdom and authority, establishing domestic and foreign safety, protecting life, property, and reputation, and promoting whatever tends to the well-being and improvement of those who are fellow-citizens. Art sets up its barriers against the forces of nature, which often assault us as a foe, or constrains her to submit to man and to accomplish his designs. Though separated by the abyss of the ocean, nations bind themselves to the exchange of mutual obligations. Man has lifted his eyes to the stars. What is transpiring there in those vast distances, whose very magnitude oppresses him, escapes not his penetrating glance. He describes the mysterious movements of the Almighty, guiding the heavenly bodies on their way, prescribing to them where they shall shine, and when they shall disappear. He penetrates the bowels of the earth, and brings up to glisten in the sunlight that which lay hid in the darkness of her depths. He does more than this in his own bosom—an abyss not less deep and dark. And while he thinks and feels, he observes the laws of his own thoughts and feelings. He lifts up his thoughts higher than the sun, higher than the most distant stars; he lifts them up to God Himself, and bows in the dust before Him. In what of glory or grandeur can he be wanting who is capable of knowing and worshipping God? Little or nothing could be lacking to man were not this power abruptly checked; or, which is still worse, were it not frightfully abused. What could restrain this man with his skill in reasoning out the sublimest and most difficult problems, were not this power associated with the necessity of labour and the liability to mistakes? An outside impression has struck him; all his thoughts are scattered. A disorder attacks some portion of his body, whose co-operation with the mind is needful, and all his thoughts swim about chaotic and in disorder. A somewhat inferior check, by which God humbles our pride, springs from man's mistakes in judgment. Even that power by which man discerns the truth he employs to hurl truth from the throne, and to set up error in truth's stead; squandering upon it the enthusiasm which only the truth should inspire. Through reason man is capable of living in well-ordered society. But are not the perverse principles which result in the overthrow of all social order, of all human well-being, taught and propagated by a reason degenerate? Through reason man is able to distinguish between his immortal soul and his perishable body. But has not the same reason sought to obliterate this distinction, leaving him in frightful confusion? As though his very being itself, with all its noblest faculties, were a contribution of his physical development! Through reason he is capable of investigating the powers of nature, and tracing them to their Creator. But has not this reason also presumed to assign to things themselves their own origin, their own preservation, their own destruction? Has it not arrayed in open opposition a Nature idolised and a God betrayed? 2. Just as emphatic are the contradictions which we discern



in man's moral nature. Does he not, in this respect also, sometimes exhibit a grandeur and sublimity in which we recognise traces of the Divine image in which he was created? As God Himself has prescribed the law of love, which He displays toward His Son, begotten of Him from all eternity, and toward all beings created anew through the blood of His Son; so, also, is the same law engraven in the soul of man, and he finds rest only in the consciousness that through love and the manifestations of love is he one with the whole kingdom of God. This commandment is not easily fulfilled. For the world without and the love of the world within present to it a fearful obstacle. Yet just as mighty as is the foe, so glorious is the victory. And how many examples of these hard-fought victories has the history of the world recorded! And how many names distinguished for virtue shine in all the ages! A great and noble army of God's champions, who not only overcome their forbidden tendency to evil, but who also sacrifice time's noble things for something nobler: things seen, and even life itself, for things not seen, and who, by freeing themselves from all things earthly, have discovered to the world a freedom like that of God, to whom all things are subject. Not, indeed, without God's help. Yet is that a trifling glory—to ascribe this to Himself, and to regard all our actions as emanating from God? Not—and this is the greatest glory of all—not for their own glory did they accomplish this. Yet what glory is greater than to seek only the glory of God; to cast our hard-won palms at His feet, and confess that He has done it, and not we ourselves. And not only from you, ye heroes in virtue, but from those also who inflict upon themselves painful austerities, do we recognise the sublimity of our nature. Yes, this also is beautiful, to weep and mourn, not for an earthly happiness, which we have lost, but for happiness spiritual; because we have not kept a commandment engraven on the heart. For this proves that spiritual things are recognised as our highest good. (*F. Thereemin, D.D.*)

*Man and the universe:*—The Psalmist has been contemplating the clear midnight sky, and there strikes into his soul that old, that unchanging sensation by contrast to the vastness of man's littleness. Everything that has happened in the way of advancing our knowledge of the world has gone to augment this consciousness of man's physical littleness. Astronomy has shown that this planet is not the centre of any system at all. Geology took up the tale where astronomy had left it; and man, the speck in space, becomes but as a moment in time. Biology took up the story where geology left it; and man, the speck in space, the moment in time, becomes now just as one of the changing phases in the ever-running river of life. True, there is a sense in which science gives back to us with its left hand what it has taken away with its right. Still, man feels his littleness as he never felt it before in the vastness, the inconceivable vastness, of the system of nature. When you look at man in history there again the same sensation is borne in upon your mind. Man in history appears as moving under the impulse of vast forces which he cannot control. Men are dispirited, embittered, crushed by the sense of their own failure, by the sense that they are infinitely weak, and circumstances infinitely strong. The individual life seems just but as a spark that can be snuffed out, puffed out, just by the breath and the wind of circumstance. Among great men there is no one to whom the sense of man's littleness has presented itself with such overwhelming force as to Pascal. It is when we pass from the intellect to the moral faculties that we first begin to gain reassurance. There is in man, who can resist and can impress a spiritual and moral meaning on his circumstances, something greater than there is in all the universe beside. There is in all of us, whatever we may have been, something which rises in us and tells us what we are meant to do and to be, some sense of duty, some inherent conviction, that what we ought to be is assuredly in the long run what we can be. And this conscience forces us to believe, that there is a moral purpose in this world, which must at last be vindicated as supreme. All the vague mass of emotion and feeling of this sort comes to its centre, and finds its realisation in the victory and the ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the glory of the Christian faith that for us who believe in Jesus, and know the record of His life, all the dim faith in the supremacy of goodness has reached a point of primary realisation. Sovereignty, supreme and absolute, is in the case of Jesus of Nazareth the goal and climax of all moral effort. The exaltation of Jesus is not His own personal supremacy merely; it is the hope and encouragement of the whole race. To us Christians the ascension, the glorification of our Lord, His triumph as prophet, priest, and king, ought to be a thought both of continual power and continual inspiration. . . . In the moral world, ay, in the world of matter as well as of spirit, there is nothing ultimately strong but that cause, that cause of thorough-

going holiness, truth, and love, which is for ever embodied in Jesus our Lord. (*Bishop Gore.*) *The glory of manhood*:—"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Psa. viii. 4.) It was a contemplation of the vastness and the beauty and the glory of the universe that caused David to ask this question in wondering awe. David reasons with himself that here is the Great Being who fills the midnight sky with suns and moons and planets and worlds, like shining jewels, and yet cares so much about man, who is physically so insignificant when compared to these creations, that He visits him and holds communion with him in loving tenderness. It would be inconceivable if man were only an animal; it is not the outward man which can be seen with the eye, but the inward man, the unseen, the spiritual personality, which chooses and decides, which forms purposes and devises schemes to carry them out,—that is the man whom God visits, and whose prosperity is important. There could be no greater folly than for men or women to treat themselves as though the physical life, which needs to have clothing of more or less fashionable cut, and food that may please the palate or nourish the body, were the real man or woman whose comfort is to indicate the decisions of life. The folly is evident when we consider that this outward, physical life is a very fragile and temporary affair, which has no certain lease of existence, and is liable to be pulled down at any time, liable to be snuffed out like a candle, while the inner spiritual personality is to go on living for ever. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*) *That Thou art mindful of him.*—*God mindful of man*:—At times the thought comes to all thinking men that it is presumption to think that God cares for us. Webster was kept back from Christianity for a long time by this thought. Look at proof of the mindfulness of God outside the Bible. We learn from our own hearts and from nature—1. That it is wrong for parents to bring children into the world and not care for them. Are we to suppose that God would enact in heaven what our sense of justice and charity will not allow on earth—that the superior can be unmindful of the inferior? 2. It seems natural for any one to think most of his best workmanship. Napoleon thought most of Austerlitz, Wellington of Waterloo, Morse of the telegraph, Lincoln of the Emancipation proclamation. Man is God's best workmanship. Man is capable of wonderful growth. I am sorry we have sinned; but we are wonderfully constructed. It can never be that God is unmindful of such workmanship. God sees in man what is like Himself, the sense of justice, hatred of cruelty, unselfishness. To say that God is unmindful of us, that we cannot add to or take from His glory, is to say that I am a better being than He is, for I do care for them that are lower down than I am. What tenderness we find in the human heart! I read what that most wretched father, the father of Charley Ross, said in Boston some time ago, "I will search for my lost boy while life lasts; I will go up and down the earth, and look into the face of this child, and then of that, to see if it is my lost boy." What! has God placed such love in man for his lost child, and will not He care for His children, lost children though they be? (*H. M. Gallaher, D.D.*) *God mindful of man*:—These words furnish no reasonable ground for a doubt as to the possibility of God's exercising a sustaining providence in favour of such a creature as man. They express a conviction which lies at the root of all natural as well as all revealed religion. The root and ground-work of all religion is the impulse which leads men to pray. Man's relation to God as a person; man's dependence on God; man's power to ask, and God's power to give such things as that dependence makes necessary. We pervert this conviction when we represent God under a form which makes providence a fiction and prayer a delusion, as an impersonal principle, as an immovable intelligence, as an inexorable fate, as a being who has no feeling for the wants of man, and is inaccessible to his prayers. The very conception of universal law and order, which science discloses as pervading the material world, is liable, if contemplated in an irreligious spirit, to lead our thoughts away from God, who is mindful of man and visits him, to represent to us a God of science, who is not a God of worship, to set before us an intelligence, it may be, manifested in the grand scheme of the universe, but to hide from us the personal God of each one of us, our Father who is in heaven. The first duty of man is enjoined upon him as the command of God. The first sin of man is disobedience against God. The first dim shadowing forth of man's deliverance from the power of sin is the redemption provided by God. We are not told that man transgressed against the moral order of things; we are not told that he disobeyed the dictates of his own reason; we are not told that he felt the reproofs of an accusing conscience. We are not told

that man was created as a part of the world, and under the general law of the world; that his creation was a step in the development of forces acting under some natural and necessary impulse; that his fall was but a further continuation of that development, a stage in the course of progress which was determined for all things from the beginning. The opening of Scripture brings before us man in his religious nature, as a being created by and dependent upon God. This is the first teaching of Scripture, and it is also the last. Man, in the progress of his knowledge, is ever striving after unity, ever seeking to reduce many phenomena to one general principle. To reduce many effects to one cause, many phenomena to one law; to this tendency are due all the grander triumphs of science within her proper field, but to this also are due the most pernicious errors of a false science, striving to establish herself in a field which is not her own. The boundaries of the one and of the other are clearly marked out alike by the consciousness of man and by the Word of God. Obliterate distinctions, frame general laws as we will, there is one distinction which stands out marked and prominent as the basis of all philosophy and all religion, a distinction which neither philosophy nor religion can set aside without destroying themselves at the same time: the distinction between mind and its objects, between moral and physical law, between liberty and necessity, in one word, between person and things. Man, like the natural world, is the work of God; but man, unlike the material world, can know that he is the work of God, and can worship the God who made him. And man too, unlike the material world, can obey or disobey the law which God has given him. Modern sophistry either regards man and the laws of man's conduct as but a part of the course of nature, or talks of necessary determinations and invariable antecedents of the human will. Against both perversions the language of Scripture furnishes a standing protest, and if read aright a safeguard. From the very beginning of the world man stands out apart and distinct from the rest of God's creation, alone made in the image of God, alone subject to a moral law, alone capable of obedience or disobedience to that law. God is revealed in relation to man as He is revealed in relation to no other of His visible creatures—the personal God of His personal creatures. (*Dean Mansel.*) *God's care of men:*—When we consider the care of Providence over the children of men, whether manifested in the works of nature or of grace, we naturally fall into the reflection of the text, and wonder to see so much done for men, who seem to have no merit or desert equal thereto. And if we go from the works of nature to those of grace, the same reflection will pursue us still. One would think that men, owing so much to God, would be careful to serve and obey Him. But the very contrary is the truth. They made gods of brutes, and became brutes themselves. For why should he not turn brute himself who has one for his god? But the wonder is that God should care for such creatures, that He should be willing to forgive them, and to send His Son into the world to die for them. Now all this should lead men to adore and give thanks to God for His grace and favour. But often it has the opposite effect. For when men consider that God does nothing without reason, and at the same time see so little reason why God should do so much for them, they begin to suspect whether He has done it or no, and to imagine that the whole history of the redemption is a cunningly devised fable. The wonders of grace—the incarnation and the death of the Son of God—are so tremendous, whilst there is nothing in man that bears any proportion to such concern for him. Now this reasoning is plausible; it does justice to the wisdom of God, and no injustice to man. But this prejudice lies as much against the works of nature as against those of grace. For who would have dreamt that there should be such a glorious world for such a creature as man? It is therefore but a like wonder that God should send His Son to redeem us. If He created them, surely He may redeem them. But in reply to all such reasoning let us—I. ASK OURSELVES WHETHER WE ARE PROPER JUDGES IN THIS MATTER? Who are we, to judge of what it is wise for God to do? In human affairs we pretty well know and are able to judge, of the powers, abilities, and ends of men, and of their wisdom. In judging of a house you do not think merely of the man who is to live in it, but of the power, station, wealth, and so on of the builder, and then you judge whether or no too much has been lavished upon it. So in regard to this earth. True, it is for man to inhabit, but we are not to think of him only, but of the great Builder and Maker, who is God. And as He has infinite power, who are we that we should say that He has spent too much? II. AND DO WE COMPREHEND FULLY THE END PROPOSED? If you see a great building, but know not for what use it is intended, how can you say whether it be too large or small, or ought else about it? III. AND THIS



REASONING APPLIES ALSO TO THE WORKS OF GRACE. It is indeed wonderful that the Son of God should be born of a virgin, and suffer and die for our redemption. But why should we object? Do we know that the end proposed could have been gained in any other way? And what is there wonderful, other than being unusual, in that Christ should be born of a virgin? And why should not God dwell here, if He see fit? And we are not told that we are the only persons concerned in the work of redemption. Redemption has far-reaching purposes. Who are we, then, to judge of it as some do? And if we find, as we do, that God has taken such care for our present life, is it not reasonable to suppose that He will also care for our spirits? In both nature and grace, the works of God are indeed wonderful, and we unworthy of the least of them. And we may justly say of both: Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? (*Thomas Sherlock, D.D.*) *God mindful of man*:—Look at these words in reference—I. To DAVID. He wrote the Psalm. It expresses—1. Wonder—that God should have chosen him. God acts as a sovereign, choosing whom He will. 2. Care—for God had been very mindful of him. II. To CHRIST. He is the grand sum and substance of the Psalms. And here we have—1. Wonder; for how wonderful is Christ. 2. Care—God took care of Him. III. To SAINTS. This their language. It is that of—1. Depreciation; for how little and how unworthy are they. 2. Acknowledgment; for God hath been mindful of His people. 3. Observation: What is God in His nature, covenant, person? And what is man, by nature, fallen, renewed? 4. Inference: That as God is mindful of you, you are to be mindful of God. Be consoled. Maintain communion. Look on to the eternal future. (*Edward Andrews, LL.D.*) *God mindful of man*:—Christianity viewed as a system is seen to be sublime, when we consider the oneness and harmony of its grand design. But infidelity is not so; it is inconsistent with itself. Some say that human nature can regenerate, can perfect itself; that it has in it a principle inherently good, and needs no Gospel to lead it into the way of truth. Others say, man is so insignificant that it is not to be thought that he can be brought into contact with God; he is but dust, and as such is born and dies. They quote our text in a sense the opposite of that in which it is meant. But it meets both objections. The first—that man can perfect himself. For the Psalm evidently expresses astonishment at the condescension of God in visiting creatures so unworthy of His regard. Then people, in their pride, think that God has not visited man at all, nor do they desire that He should. Man does not need it. Thus they set aside the whole government of God, and turn the world into a desolate wilderness, and make the human race orphans, with no Father to guide, to help, to save. And then the second objection—that we are too insignificant for God to notice. This is a more natural thought than the former one, but it is, nevertheless, a very hurtful one. It resolves itself, really, into an infirmity of our perceptive faculties. It dethrones God, for it makes Him like ourselves. We, no doubt, are confined and baffled in the presence of a multitude of objects. But God is not as we are. He does care for the least as well as the greatest. The creation that is lower than ourselves refutes the objection; for if God care not for us, still less will He care for them. I. HOW GOD IS MINDFUL OF MAN. 1. He is so always, from the earliest hour of our infancy. 2. He has provided all things necessary for our existence. 3. And for our happiness. He has given us the pleasures of sense, of imagination, of friendship, of memory; above all, the pleasure of holiness. How monstrous, then, the thought that God has left the world to shift for itself, that He is far off and takes no notice of us. 4. Read also the Scripture histories for further proof. See how God visited Adam, Noah, Abraham, and others. How He became incarnate in Christ, whose whole life showed how God was mindful of man. And especially it was a visit of atonement. And now it is by His Spirit, who strives with each man's soul; who meets us in prayer, and in our worship in God's house. 5. And He is mindful of us in His providence. Even our afflictions are all for our good. II. BUT WHY IS HE THUS MINDFUL OF US? We may well wonder why. True, man is endowed with mind capable of understanding truth, but the chief reason is, For God so loved the world, &c. III. THEN, SHOULD WE NOT BE MINDFUL OF HIM? (*W. M. Punshon.*) *The Divine regard to man*:—I. A SUMMARY SURVEY OF GOD'S REGARD TO MAN. In all the helpless years of infancy and childhood. In all the dangers and snares of youth. In all the concerns of manhood. In all the infirmity and decrepitude of old age. He is mindful of us in providing "all things needful"—laying the whole creation under contribution towards our benefit, and also by a constant inspection of our heart and our ways. He visits man—1. By visible manifestations of His presence. 2. By the incarnation

of our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. By the influences of His Spirit. 4. By the dispensations of His providence. II. ON WHAT GROUND WE MAY JUSTIFY THIS PROFUSION OF BOUNTY AND REGARD TO MAN. What is man viewed as a material being, and an inhabitant of the present world only? In point of magnitude, splendour and magnificence, or duration. Looking at man in this light only, the Divine conduct towards him is more mysterious than ever. What is man, considered as an intelligent being, and destined to be the inhabitant of an eternal world? Here the clouds will begin to disperse, and we shall see the wisdom as well as goodness of God towards men. What is man, considered as a spiritual being, and capable of redemption? (*Delta in "Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons."*) *How and why God is mindful of man*:—I. *How*. 1. Satisfying his mental aspirations. Though each occupies but an infinitesimal space on the globe, yet in every breast there is a yearning after the boundless and infinite. The child is ambitious to climb the heap of soil in the field; the youth must scale mountain peaks to view landscape and sea; the man must leave native lands to conquer forests of unexplored continents; the sailor yearns to reach the poles; and then, after navigating the globe and bringing up from its heart unnumbered treasures, the play of human ambitions is not finished. But a moment comes when mere materialistic investigations and discoveries do not satisfy. Our very knowledge of the universe at last causes us to recede into our inner self, and we become absorbed in the mystery of our own being. Then are we tempted to cry out in awestruck wonder, "O Lord, who am I that Thy Eternal Mind should be full of me?" Christ alone gives the satisfying answer. We were created to grow up into His stature. 2. Satisfying his spiritual needs. When sordid ambition has spent its life; when the hand has gripped its last possession, then memory awakes either as a mocking spectre or as an angel of peace. Starving souls, come to Jesus. He shall feed you with the living bread. We are children of eternity. 3. In every circumstance of temporal existence God rides the whirlwind and rules the storm. If we could see deep enough, we should recognise that "Whatever is, is in its causes just." Yet, while the future remains a dim, unknown quantity to our reason, and shadows flit across the canvas of our daily life, it is hard to believe that God stands within the shadow keeping watch over His own. What we now call "Discord" is really "Harmony not understood." II. *Why*. 1. Because He loves us. God cannot, by His very nature, by all His covenants of grace and mercy, leave His own. But we can leave Him. We can wander from the Father's house. 2. Because He desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return unto Him and live. Sin is a gigantic failure. George Eliot says, "I could not live in peace if I put the shadow of a wilful sin between myself and God." It is human to err; but fiendish to dwell in guilt. But Christ died for sin. Fill your soul with the Divine anger against your own sin; leave it now, and fly to the Father of lights. (*W. Wynn.*) *That Thou visitest him*.—*Some crises of human life and their moral lessons*:—"What is man?" The child of circumstance, yet endowed with freedom of moral choice, and weighted with the responsibility which that freedom brings. All creation waited for the coming of man, who was to be to all things, animate and inanimate, master and lord. This dominion, whence was it? It lies not in superior strength, powers of endurance, or length of days, but in that mysterious relation to the Maker of all, His likeness, His image, in which man alone of all God's works was made. He is the being whom God made for this one beneficent purpose, to be the recipient of His visitation, the object of His Divine regard. This visitation is no accidental feature introduced to repair the catastrophe of the fall, but an integral part of God's original design. Man was made—each man is made—to be the companion, the friend, of God! 1. Trace God's visitations to His intelligent creatures upon earth, as Bible history unfolds them to us. Holy Scripture is one continuous record of God's effort to catch the attention of human ears, and to win the affection of human hearts. If we had ever any doubt of man's destiny, and the purpose of his creation, surely the incarnation of God has removed it. 2. God visits us all and each. There are those general visitations in which God has drawn near to us collectively. When the history of this century is written no fact will stand out more conspicuously than this, that it has witnessed an extraordinary visitation of God in the revival of Christian faith, Christian worship, and Christian practice. There is another and very different form of visitation that is quite as truly of God. That large knowledge of the natural world, its forces and their application, to which modern science has advanced with such splendid strides.

"Never before have the aspects of this natural world been so curiously, sensitively, and lovingly watched as now." How do we receive this visitation? Has the issue of it been, "that the invisible things of God are more clearly seen," or has it been this,—“We have swept the heavens with our telescope, and have found no God”? Or are we afraid of science altogether, with a foolish, faithless fear, refusing to believe that by its means God is drawing nearer to our souls? But there are also individual visitations in which God makes Himself felt in every human life; some of these are so striking and significant that even the most careless soul can only put them away by an effort; some of them so quiet and commonplace that only the spiritually minded will see God's hand in them at all. Shall we not, then, make it our prayer and our endeavour to keep alive and awake within our souls that heavenly faculty whereby we can recognise our God when He draws near in whatever way He please to visit us? (*E. J. Gough, M.A.*) *The royal visit and its object*:—When the Prince of Wales visited America, people were very anxious to know what he came for. Had he come to look into the principles and results of the Republican Government—our form of government? Had he come for his health, or did he come to remain? He did not tell us. We were none the wiser after he left us. But when the Prince of Heaven came He did not come on any secret mission. He told us He came that He might bind up the broken-hearted; that He might give liberty to the captives; that He might give sight to the blind; that He might seek and save that which was lost, and to strengthen the weak. He came to heal; He came to lift up; He came to bless. He did not come to destroy men's lives, but to give life. He did not come to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He said that the Father sent Him that He might save the world. (*D. L. Moody.*)

Ver. 5. **For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.**—*Man a little lower than the angels*:—While the Psalmist refers primarily to man, we learn from St. Paul that the text has a further reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. I. **THE TEXT, AS SPOKEN OF MEN.** Perhaps it was not so much in nature as in position that man, as first formed, was inferior to the angels. Nothing higher could be affirmed of the angels than that they were made in the image of God. If, then, they had originally superiority over man, it must have been in the degree of resemblance. The angel was made immortal, intellectual, holy, powerful, glorious, and in these properties lay their likeness to the Creator. But were not these properties also given to man? Whatever originally the relative position of the angel and the man, we cannot question that since the fall man has been fearfully inferior to the angels. The effect of transgression has been to debase all his powers; but, however degraded and sunken, he still retains the capacities of his original formation, and they may be so purged and enlarged as to produce, if we may not say to restore, the equality. Take the intellect of man; there is no limit to its progress. Use the like reasoning in regard to power, or holiness, or dignity. The Bible teems with notices, that so far from being by their nature higher than men, angels even now possess not an importance which belongs to our race. It is a mysterious thing, and one to which we scarcely dare allude, that there has arisen a Redeemer of fallen men, but not of fallen angels. And angels are represented as “ministering spirits.” Believers, as the children of God, are attended and waited on by angels. Then, while human nature is still walled off from every other in its special properties, risen spirits may stand on a par with the very noblest-created intelligence, glowing with the same holiness, arrayed in the same panoply, and gathering in from all the works of God the same immenseness of knowledge and the same material of ecstasy. II. **THE TEXT, AS SPOKEN OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** His being made “a little lower than the angels” is represented as with a view to the glory which was to be the recompense for His sufferings. This is a very important representation, and from it may be drawn a strong and clear argument for the divinity of Christ. We could never see how it could be humility in any creature, whatever the dignity of his condition, to assume the office of a Mediator, and to work out our reconciliation, if an unmeasured exaltation was to be the Mediator's reward. A being who knew that he should be immeasurably elevated if he did a certain thing, can hardly be commended for the greatness of his humility in doing that thing. He must be the king already, ere his entering the state of slavery can furnish an example of humility. And yet in consenting to be “made a little lower than the angels” our blessed Redeemer actually humbled Himself. Who, then, can this man have been before becoming man? We cannot suppose that the attributes or properties of Godhead



were capable of being laid aside or suspended. Shrouded and hidden, but not laid aside, was the divinity of Christ. If He could not lay aside the perfections, He could lay aside the glories of Deity. Every outward mark of majesty and greatness might be laid aside. He passes from the form of God to the likeness of men. It is not in the power of language to describe either the humility or the compassion thus displayed. It was literally the emptying Himself, the making Himself poor, "that we through His poverty might be made rich." (*Henry Melville, B.D.*)

*Man and angel*:—I. MAN LOWER THAN THE ANGELS. 1. By creation the angel is the "elder brother" of the two, for he was created first. Angels' songs always bear some reference to man; something pertaining to man invariably forms part of their theme. Not only in time is man lower than the angels, he is so—2. In the substance from which he is formed. Angels are pure spirits, but one part of man is formed out of the clay. 3. In his habitation. God gave heaven for an abode unto the angels, but "the earth hath He given to the children of men." 4. In his powers. Angels "excel in strength." "Man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm." 5. In his character. Man was not made as he is, but he has made himself so, by his sin.

II. MAN EQUAL TO THE ANGELS. 1. Although not in the same workroom, they are in the same service. The king's livery is worn by the humblest guard of the mail, as well as by the highest officers of the household. The angel said to John in Patmos, "I am thy fellow-servant." 2. They are equal in rights and privileges. The godly man is as sure of heaven as any of the angels who are now there: only as yet he is not made meet for it. 3. In kindred, for man, too, is a child of God. 4. In duration of existence. Every man is to exist for ever. "Neither can they die any more."

III. MAN HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS. That is, in his glorified state. 1. He shall have a better feast. There will be dishes on man's table that angels can never taste. 2. Better apparel. Man's garments will be the workmanship of "grace." They are more expensive. Angels' garments cost only a word; but blood was essential to wash the robes of the saints and to make them white. 3. A better song. Saints have themes the angels cannot think upon, and strains which they can never reach. 4. A better position, and superior privileges. Angels shall approach very near the throne; but they shall never sit upon it. (*David Roberts, D.D.*)

*God's idea of man*:—What is the "little" which marks man's inferiority? It is mainly that the spirit, which is God's image, is confined in and limited by flesh, and subject to death. The distance from the apex of creation to the Creator must ever be infinite; but man is so far above the non-sentient, though mighty, stars and the creatures that share earth with him, by reason of his being made in the Divine image—i.e. having consciousness, will, and reason—that the distance is foreshortened. The gulf between man and matter is greater than that between man and God. The moral separation caused by sin is not in the Psalmist's mind. Thus man is invested with some reflection of God's glory, and wears this as a crown. He is king on earth. . . . Such then is man, as God meant him to be. Such a being is a more glorious revelation of the Name than all stars and systems. Looked at in regard to his duration, his years are a handbreadth before these shining ancients of days that have seen his generations fret their little hour and sink into silence; looked at in contrast with their magnitude and numbers, numberless, he is but an atom, and his dwelling-place a speck. Science increases the knowledge of his insignificance, but perhaps not the impression of it made on a quiet heart by the simple sight of the heavens. But besides the merely scientific view, and the merely poetic, and the grimly agnostic, there is the other, the religious, and it is as valid to-day as ever. To it the heavens are the work of God's finger, and their glories are His, set there by Him. That being so, man's littleness magnifies the Name, because it enhances the condescending love of God, which has greatnessened the littleness by such nearness of care, and such gifts of dignity. The reflection of His glory which blazes in the heavens is less bright than that which gleams in the crown of glory and honour on man's lowly yet lofty head. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*The dignity of man—his restlessness*:—"But little lower than God" (R.V.). It seems as though man were born with the rudiments of omniscience, and was therefore bound to be made impatient by the discovered presence of anything that declined to be known; and born, likewise, with the rudiments of omnipresence, and therefore bound to be disquieted by the sight of any frontier not yet transcended. That is one of the startling proofs of the impatient in our nature. Put a man in a room, and, no matter how large the room, he wants the window up; every place crowds and we want to move out. From the time when Abraham crossed the Euphrates and Joshua went over the Jordan, mankind has been wanting

to get out and over the river. We do not know all the lakes in Africa yet, but some of us are a good deal more interested over the imagined discovery of canals in the planet Mars than we are over the seas and waterways of the distant parts of our own globe. No pasture is so large but we want to get over the fence and crop the grass on the other side. Not only are we irritated by limitations of place, and try to be ubiquitous, but are similarly annoyed by limitations of time, and attempt to explore and map the centuries that preface recorded history, and even the ages that are the threshold of the present history of the earth and heavens. We are so accustomed to this habitual intrusion into untraversed domains that it can easily escape us what a certain irrepressibleness moving within us all this betokens; and this sailing out among the stars and then coming home, for a little while, to make a book of what we have seen there, what the stars are made of, how large they are, how much they weigh, whether they are young or old, infant, middle-aged, grey-haired, or imbecile, and this groping back into the old years of our universe, towards the primeval days, tracking the progress of events, or trying to decipher the wheel-marks made in the old strata or on the cosmic star-mist by the giant car of onward movement when creation's springtide was yet on, and then coming quietly back to to-day, and in an easy-chair by the fire complacently pencilling diary notes of the world's babyhood, and with no feeling at all but that it is the thing for a man to do, that the universe is to be known, and that man is here to know it—well, there is a Titanic audacity about it all that is to me superbly uplifting. Man may have failed in a good deal that he attempts, a good many diary memoranda he may have entered under the wrong day of the month or even under the wrong month, but there is a hugeness in the very venture that betrays Titanic fibre. There are certain heights of audacity that the fool may essay to scale, but there are cloud-piercing pinnacles of audacity that there is not room in a fool's mind to even conceive or tension to adventure. But not only can man stand up in the face of nature and cross-question it and compel it to testify too, but he can exercise upon nature a volitional as well as an intellectual mastery, and can harness it to his own purposes. We are not afraid of the World any more, in the old way in which men used to be, partly because we know her way. We know how to take her. We have a presentiment of what she is plotting before she does it, and so not likely, as once, to be caught napping. The forces that used to play about us with all the untrained friskiness of wild horses, prancing and cantering over the plain, we have caught, some of them, and have put a collar about their necks and bits in their mouths, and, by means of a good deal of draft-tackle that we have rather ingeniously devised, have set them drawing our loads, turning our wheels, working our machinery, and running all our errands. And, now, what we call Civilisation is, a good deal of it, simply a matter of the success with which we make nature do our work. We are not, of course, claiming for man that he has completely subjected the world's wide energy. Storm and steam have still to be dealt with warily—a thunderbolt is still hot if handled carelessly; but the entire attitude of man towards all these things is changed. A lion is stronger than a man, and if the two meet on brute ground the lion will always be a good deal more than a match for him; but man is a good deal smarter than the lion, and if the two meet on an intelligent ground, the lion will be driven to the wall. So in regard to the raw energies of the material world, if man undertakes to wrestle with nature on material ground, man will invariably be whipped, and the bit of lightning would be just as demoralising to a Socrates as to a mule or pony, providing the encounter take place on territory that is distinctively the lightning's own. But let a man take that same bit of lightning on to ground that is distinctively his own, and he will file its teeth and put a muzzle over its nose, and tie a string around its neck and attach a letter to that string and send the little amphibious streak either under the water to London or overland to San Francisco, and all over so quickly that you see his muzzle on the return trip almost before you had time to know that he was fully off. That is the sort of thing that man is when he steps off from the ground of materiality or of brutality and gathers himself together on the imperial platform of his own God-imitating personality; and there is where he wants to keep himself in all this matter of trying to appreciate his true and genuine denotement. Damaging and discouraging suspicions of diminutiveness are never going to insinuate themselves and get the better of us till we have been allowing our measure to be calculated on some other basis than that of what we distinctly are as personal beings. That is why David in the earlier part of this very Psalm was oppressed by thoughts of man's littleness; he undertook to compute human greatness with an

astronomical tape-line; he was distressed by the small figure he made as seen against the vastness of the stellar sky taken as a background. But the mere arithmetic immensity of the heavens has properly nothing to do with it; yardsticks are utterly foreign to the account. It was a far greater thing to be David contemplating the heavens than it was to be the heavens making eyes at David. It is a greater thing to be able to think the heavens than it is to be the heavens. (*Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Man's glory—its loss and recovery*.—In the apse of St. Sophia's, Constantinople, the guide points out a place where there is a hidden face of Christ portrayed by some early Christian artist. When the Mohammedan conqueror possessed himself of that noble Christian temple he ordered all Christian symbols to be effaced. This beautiful head of Christ was covered over with canvas. When the Christian conqueror again enters the gates of Constantinople the canvas will doubtless be torn away and this bit of early Christian art be brought to light and restored; and let but the gates of the city of man's soul be opened to the conquering King, and his Lord shall strip away the sins that hide God's glory in these fleshly temples, and the resplendent image of God shall be seen in men once more.

**Ver. 6. Thou madest him to have dominion.**—*Man's dominion*.—Dominion is a far-reaching word. We have not yet thrown our measuring-line upon it, and realised all its suggestions and inspiration. Is there not a stirring sometimes in the heart, which means: I was meant to be a king; I was meant to be master; I was meant to exercise dominion—dominion over the enticements of matter; it was intended that I should be able to say to the most fascinating spectacles that could appeal to me—Stand back! Man was meant to have dominion over the satisfactions of sense. Is it not quite heroic, in some small way at least, that a man shall be able to say to a habit, I have done with thee; you do not leave this day fortnight—you leave now! That is what God means man to be and to do in regard to everything that is not of the nature of God Himself. It is well to put our very habits through a process of discipline, supposing the habit to be not altogether wicked. Is it worth while that we should be able to hold things in dominion if we cannot hold ourselves in check? The great aim of every life should be self-control, dominion over self. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

**Vers. 6, 7, 8. Thou hast put all things under his feet, &c.**—*Cruelty to animals*.—If the lower creation were not too insignificant or worthless to contribute to the glory of Jesus, they cannot be deemed too insignificant for Him to care for, and for us to protect and honour. We know it is said of His saints that "he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of His eye." In other words, He feels what is done to His people as sensitively as if it had been done to Himself. And, of course, while there is a sense in which, using human language, He must be jealous of them, as He is in regard to no other (they being emphatically the fruit of the travail of His soul), yet if all creatures have been intrusted to His sovereignty, and are the subjects of His sway, He must regard any wanton injustice or cruelty inflicted on the meanest and the lowliest as an unwarranted aggression on what the old divines call His "rectorial rights." It may seem to some an unnecessary straining of the subject: that it would be better to rest and vindicate it on principles of ordinary benevolence. It is well, indeed, that we can take up the lower ground too, and, for those who would scorn the appeal to gospel motive, address ourselves to the claims and sympathies of our common humanity. But I do confess it seems to me that this theme secures a far more commanding demonstration when we see the lower animals, whose oppression we are called to denounce, placed under the especial care and authority of the Redeemer; that as the living creatures were brought one by one to the first Adam to be named and placed under his protection, so the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who is to restore in every respect what the other forfeited, has had among the "all things put under His feet," "all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." Though the members of the lowlier creation are represented in the text as subjected to the rule of Christ, they have been subordinated by Him to the care of man. To man, as high priest of creation, they have been made over at once for his use, and to secure his protection and kindness. In thus consigning them to his custody, this great Lord of nature has given significant intimation of the treatment He Himself designs them to receive at the hands of their deputed governor. He has manifested on every side a desire for the happiness of His creatures. Pain is in no instance the law or condition of their



being. The sport of the insect, the carol of the lark, the gambols of the quadruped, the gush of summer song in the groves and woods, all read the design and intention of a bountiful, beneficent, and benevolent Ruler. And if man, therefore, abuse his delegated authority, and instead of the merciful guardian and friend of the helpless, become the rigorous tyrant and torturer, does he not thereby set himself up in guilty defiance of the purposes of the Almighty, and do what he can to abridge the happiness he was commissioned to provide and promote? We shall proceed to enforce, from a few brief considerations, the duty of abstaining from the infliction of pain on the inferior creation, and their paramount claims on man's sympathy, protection, and kindness. Let us advert, at the outset, to a lurking and widely accepted fallacy with regard to the lower animals having a comparative insensibility to pain. That they are capable of a certain amount of suffering none dare dispute, but we question if there be not at the root of much of that reckless torture of which they are the subjects, an impression that their wild and untamed habits of life and their iron frames make them proof against the physical anguish of which the human being is susceptible. I would ask what in anatomy, what in physiology is there to bear out such an hypothesis? How can I more befittingly sum up this subject than by a closing reference and reply? Some have ventured to assert that the lower animals, being infinitely beneath us in the scale of being, are unfit subjects and objects for any such special and exceptional tenderness as that for which we plead. I ask, Where should we have been at this moment if this were a recognised and universally-acted-upon law in the government of God—that a being, because superior in the scale of existence, should refuse to bestow regard or interest on those who are some degrees beneath him? Is not the whole scheme of redemption one marvellous display of the condescension and kindness of one Being to those immeasurably below Him? Man's condescension to the lower animals! What is this in comparison with God's regardfulness of man? The former is but the attention and kindness of one creature to another, both springing from earth, both hastening to dissolution. But the kindness of God to the human offspring is that of the Infinite to the finite, Almighty to nothingness, Deity to dust! Oh, if God, the great God Almighty, thus visits the guilty with tenderness, shall we visit the innocent and unoffending with cruelty and oppression? when He has thrown the shield of His merciful, but unmerited, protection over us, shall we thus requite His kindness by acting toward the humbler creatures of His hands with contempt and disdainful neglect? No! as we behold His kingdom stretching downwards from the pinnacles of glory to every living thing in the habitable parts of the earth, where from the beginning His delights have been, let us recognise the beauty and profound meaning of that magnificent vision which burst on the prophet by the river Chebar—significant exposition of the Mediator's sovereignty: the fourfold resemblances or images of creature-forms, of which only one was human, and the other three of the lower animals—the lion, the ox, and the eagle; while over all, in the sapphire firmament, we read, was “the likeness as the appearance of a man.” It was the very truth and language of our text embodied and symbolised: the all-glorious and glorified Mediator presiding over the Kingdom of Providence, and demonstrating in the most extensive sense “His Kingdom ruleth over all”! Seeing, then, that all creatures thus wait upon Him, that He gives them their meat in due season, let the topic of our meditation (pleading, and pleading all the more earnestly for those who cannot plead for themselves) receive the loftiest enforcement by joining in with the loyal ascription of the Psalmist—“Thou hast put all things under his feet.” (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*)

*The supreme rule of Christ:*—This Psalm is stamped with a world-wide breadth; it is of no nation, it is of all time; it shines with a light transcending that of mere human genius. We are brought face to face with these three—nature, man, and God. Here is no picture drawn from nature. This description—“Thou hast put all things under his feet”—does not, as a matter of fact, describe man's present position on the globe. All things are not put under him. He does not reign over nature, he wrestles with nature. The Psalmist is not using here the language of prophetic inspiration. He is looking back to the primitive glory, the primeval character of man as it is written upon the very first page of this book. The Bible grasps so firmly the unseen future, just because it plants its foot so strongly upon the past. Human nature did not crawl up from sentient slime; man was born with the likeness of his Father shining out from his very countenance, able to converse with God, and to render intelligent and loving obedience to God. Turn to the New Testament Scriptures. A new light, a new glory, suddenly breaks forth from them. “We see Jesus . . . crowned with

glory and honour." In Scripture there is but one Divine right, and that is God's own right. "His Kingdom ruleth over all." This authority is the inherent, eternal right of God in the very nature of things. Is it impossible to transfer it? Is it conceivable that the Almighty God should give His glory to another? Jesus said, "All authority is given to Me in heaven and in earth." In the days of His humiliation, our Saviour constantly exercised four kinds of authority—the authority to forgive sin; the authority to declare truth; the authority to rule nature; and the authority over human hearts and consciences—the claim of universal and absolute obedience and faith. These four are in close and inseparable moral unity. (E. R. Conder, D.D.)

## PSALM IX.

**VERS. 1-20. I will praise Thee, O Lord.—Praise, trust, and prayer :—**In the Septuagint, this Psalm refers to the death of the Divine Son, and recites His victory over death, the grave, and all our foes. I. THERE IS A PREDOMINANT NOTE OF PRAISE. (Vers. 1-5, 11, 12, 14.) Let us not praise with a divided, but a whole heart. It is incited by recounting all God's works. Let memory heap fuel on the altar of praise. II. THERE IS AN ASSERTION OF TRUST. (Vers. 7-12, 18.) The oppressed, the humble, the needy, and the poor have strong encouragement. Calamity drives them to God, and so they come to know Him, and then the more they trust Him. Doubt is born of ignorance. Leave God to vindicate you; He will not forget. III. THERE IS A PETITION FOR FURTHER HELP. (Vers. 13, 19, 20.) What a contrast between the gates of death (ver. 13), and the gates of the Holy City (ver. 14)! See Haman as illustrating ver. 15. He who lifts the righteous, hurls down the wicked. It is a sin to forget God (ver. 17). (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *The ministry of praise :—*"I will praise Thee." That is the note that is too commonly silent in our religious life. We rarely gather together for the supremely exhilarating business of praise. In the Psalm is a man who sets himself to the business of praise, as though he were about to engage in a great matter. He sets about it with undivided attention—"with my whole heart." The word "heart" is a spacious word. It includes all the interior things, all the central things; when a man comes to praise, will, intellect, and imagination must all be active. He must bring to the ministry of praise the worship of his feelings. Come will, and make my praise forceful. Come intellect, and make it enlightened. Come feeling, and make it affectionate. In the words, "I will show forth," is suggested that he will score it as with a mark, he will not allow it to slip by unrecorded. He will keep a journal of mercies. He will not only register the "marvellous works," he will publish them. The word is suggestive not only of a notebook, but of a proclamation. "I will rejoice," the word is suggestive of the exulting bubbling of the spring. The two words, "glad," "rejoice," together give us the image of the leaping waters with the sunshine on them. And such is always the joy of the Lord. It is fresh as the spring, and warm and cheering as the sunlight. (J. H. Jowett, M.A.) *A praiseful heart :—*We should praise God more, and thank Him more often for His ceaseless goodness. How can we forget His countless benefits? Dean Alford said, "It seems to me that five minutes of real thanksgiving for the love of our dear Saviour is worth a year of hard reasoning on the hidden parts of our redemption." Of the last days of the Venerable Bede, his disciple Cuthbert wrote, "He was much troubled with shortness of breath, yet without pain, before the day of our Lord's resurrection, that is, for about a fortnight, and thus he afterwards passed his life cheerful and rejoicing, giving thanks to Almighty God every day and night, nay, every hour, till the day of our Lord's ascension. He also passed all the night awake in joy and thanksgiving, unless a short sleep prevented it, in which case he no sooner awoke than he presently repeated his wonted exercises, and ceased not to give thanks to God with uplifted hands. I declare with truth that I have never seen with my eyes, or heard with my ears, any man so earnest in giving thanks to the living God."

**Ver. 4. Thou hast maintained my right. Thou satest in the throne judging right.—Man's right, and God's right :—**The first part of the fourth verse seems to be merely personal, but the second clause of the verse is universal. In the first clause we may put so much emphasis upon the personal pronoun as to make this a merely

individual instance, as if God had specialised one man as against many men, without inquiring into the merits of the case. The second clause reads, "Thou satest in the throne judging right." That is the universal tone. Not—God sitting in the throne selecting favourites, distributing prizes and rewards according to some arbitrary law, but God sitting in the throne judging right, whoever was upon one side or the other in the controversy. The whole encounter is delivered from the narrow limitation of personal misunderstanding and individual conduct, and is made one of rectitude, and God is indicated as taking part with the right. This is comfort; this, in fact, is the only true and lasting solace. If there were anything narrow, in the merely personal sense, in the government and providence of God, we should be thrown into unrest and faithlessness, or the most humiliating fear; but make the providence of God turn upon right, and then every man who does right, or who wishes to be right and to do right, may lift up his eyes to heaven and say: My help cometh from the everlasting hills; I will bear all difficulties bravely, with a really manful and sweet patience, because in the end right will be vindicated and crowned. Right is not with any set of persons, right is not a possession guaranteed to any one kind of office in the Church: it is a universal term; it rises like a universal altar, within whose shadow poor men and needy men, as well as rich and mighty men, may be gathered in the security of prayer, and in the gladness of assured hope. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

**Vers. 7, 8. The Lord shall endure for ever.**—*The abiding God*:—David here draws a contrast between changing man and the unchanging God; between evermore vanishing thrones and the throne of God, high and lifted up—His throne of judgment—a throne erected to try and determine the cause, not of David only, nor of his people only, but all men—to judge the world in righteousness. He teaches that right and wrong everywhere are objects of the Divine regard, and will be through all time, and will be when time shall be no more; that the Divine judgment, like the Divine Omnipresence, embraces every creature in the vastness of its range. In this way David ascends in his reasoning from the particular to the general, and from the general to the universal, making the Lord's dealing with him, and His people Israel, the basis of the conclusion, that so He will deal with all men. He thus encourages all men everywhere to pursue the right, assuring them that, in pursuing it, the God of all righteousness is with them, and will in due time decide it in their favour. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) **And He shall judge the world in righteousness.**—*The witness of conscience to righteousness*:—Corwin, the great orator and humorist, was once talking with several gentlemen. The conversation, which had been witty and epigrammatic, became grave and serious. One of the company made a remark about the unknown future. Corwin took it up, and said, "When I reflect that I am to be judged by a righteous and omnipotent God, I nearly go mad." So it is that the conscience within bears unequivocal testimony to our responsibility, not to a Something, of which we can form no conception, but to a Personal Being, who is the "righteous and omnipotent God," whose "offspring" we are as a Father, and whose subjects we are as Sovereign Lord Supreme.

**Vers. 9, 10. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed.**—*The refuge of the oppressed*:—I. THE LORD ALSO WILL BE A REFUGE FOR THE OPPRESSED. 1. What is a refuge? Shelter—in the cities of refuge; strongholds (2 Sam. xxii. 23); a harbour of refuge, as on a rocky, dangerous coast. Thus the leading idea is shelter. Now the Lord Jehovah as Father, Son, and Spirit is such refuge. 2. But who are the oppressed? Not only those who are oppressed in natural things, as many are; but in things spiritual. The heavy burden of sin. By Satan. Daily conflict with sin. Now the Lord is a refuge for such. II. A REFUGE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE. The Scriptures always put together the malady and the remedy. As to these times of trouble, they are sometimes—1. Seasons of temporal trouble; 2. Of spiritual trouble. These make us know that the Lord is our refuge, for we can find none elsewhere. There is no definition of what troubles, so that in all trouble we may claim this promise. III. AND THEY THAT KNOW THY NAME WILL PUT THEIR TRUST IN THEE. The name means the revealed perfections of God. His eternal faithfulness. His loving-kindness and tender mercy. His infinite wisdom. But who are they that know His name? They to whom the name of God has been revealed to their consciences. It is an experimental knowledge, and here is the grand line betwixt life and death. IV. FOR THOU, LORD, HAST NOT FORSAKEN THEM THAT SEEK THEE. This takes in the poor, the halt, the lame, the little ones



of God's family. In order to seeking God—1. We must have a desire to find something; and then, 2. Know that God, from whom we seek what we would find. (*J. C. Philpot.*) *The Lord our refuge*.—It is reported of the Egyptians that, living in the fens, and being vexed with gnats, they used to sleep in high towers, whereby, these creatures not being able to soar so high, they were delivered from the biting of them. So would it be with us when bitten with cares and fear, did we but run to God for refuge, and rest confident of His help. (*John Trapp.*) *A free refuge*.—The Hospice of St. Bernard, and the wild scenery surrounding it. The place is so cold that fish will not live in the lake, and we have seen the snow lying knee-deep at mid-summer. The Hospice is a refuge from the storm in which many travellers have rested securely, who otherwise might have been lost in the snow. This noble institution receives all passers freely, whoever they may be, without money and without price; and in this respect it is like the salvation of our Lord Jesus, for Jesus gives freely of His grace to those who have nothing to offer in return.

Ver. 10. **They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.**—*The name of God*.—Know Thy name! What does that imply, but to know all that is included in the revelation of the nature and attributes of Almighty God? Every reader of Scripture is well aware of the infinite importance which it attaches to the word Name in speaking of God. It signifies not merely a designation, however expressive and full of meaning, but a manifestation of the Eternal Deity. The trust of His rational creatures in Him is commensurate with their knowledge of all that is involved in the name. The early patriarchs knew Him by the name Elohim, a marvellous name, containing implicitly the mystery hereafter to be revealed of a plurality of persons in the unity of the Divine nature. They knew Him so far, and adored Him with deep awe and absolute trust in His power, righteousness, and goodwill. That name raised them out of earthly and debasing associations, delivered them from the fetichism of idolatry, and brought them into near contact with the spiritual world; they trusted in Him according to the measure of their knowledge, and were saved by their faith. A further disclosure of the Divine goodness and love was made by the revelation of the name Jehovah, when the Lord made all His goodness pass before Moses, and proclaimed, "Jehovah, Jehovah Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." With that revelation was associated an entire system of typical institutions, preparing the way for a still more perfect discovery, at once quickening the conscience, making it sensible of the extent of human sinfulness, and indicating the conditions and principles of a future atonement. The forms of the living Word, of the living Spirit gradually disclosed themselves to the prophetic vision, never fully revealed, yet ever approaching nearer to a personal manifestation. But the Name itself in its highest sense was first suggested, then declared, by the voices which heralded the incarnation, and by the utterances of the incarnate Word. The full meaning of the words of angelic adoration, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!" flashed upon the spirit of man when the Saviour commanded the initiatory rite, the pledge and condition of a new life, to be administered "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." To the exposition of that meaning the purest and highest intellects of Christendom have devoted themselves from the beginning; and if the forms in which their exposition has been accepted by the Church are true and scriptural, can it be questioned that they involve issues of infinite importance to our souls? Can it be a matter of indifference to us whether any one of the leading propositions in such a confession is true or not? can it be a matter on which we can err in wilfulness or negligence without peril? We are responsible indeed only for so much truth as we have the means of knowing. Every man is judged "according to that he hath, not according to that he hath not"; but for so much as we have received we are, and must be, responsible. The warmth and earnestness of our devotions, of our endeavours to do God's work, will be proportionate to the sincerity and good faith with which we receive into our hearts that truth which the Eternal Father has communicated to us through the Son and by the Holy Spirit. Our salvation from evil here, and from the penalties of evil hereafter, can only be secured by the access which God the Holy Spirit opens through the Son to the Father—an access of which the conditions vary according to circumstances known only to our Judge, but of which the certain assurance is inseparably bound up with knowledge of the Name by which the Church adores the Triune Jehovah, three Persons, one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (*Canon R. C. Cook.*) *Trusting in God*.—Few words are more

frequently used in the Bible than the word *faith*, and the thing which it is intended to describe is of prime importance. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews devotes an entire chapter to showing its majesty and weight. In the Epistle to the Romans the word *faith* plays a leading part, but the word is not defined. Still, the word is not always used in the same sense. Sometimes it is applied to what a man believes, the body of doctrine which constitutes the Divine deposit of the Church. Sometimes the word is used to describe the firmness of a man's personal convictions, or the consistency of his conduct, as when it is said that whatever is not of *faith* is *sin*. In the great majority of instances, however, *faith* describes a personal relation of unqualified confidence between man and God. This is the simple root from which the other forms of *faith* grow. *Faith* is trust, a trust without suspicion or fear, trust passing into glad and habitual surrender, so that He in whom we trust becomes our teacher, guide, and master. Such trust, if intelligently exercised, promotes fixedness of conviction and steadiness of moral purpose—it issues in deliberate fidelity and loyalty. And when this trust is challenged by the reason, either the reason in me, or the reason in others, the answer forms a body of truth which takes the name of "*faith*," because it represents the rational basis of trust or conviction. *Faith* as a system of doctrine simply states what I believe, or why I trust. *Faith* as fixedness of personal conviction simply describes trust as perfect and habitual. Primarily, therefore, *faith* is neither a body of doctrine nor a mental and moral quality, but a purely personal relation between myself and another, the relation of trust on the part of man in God. Saving *faith* is just this, confidence in God issuing in consecration. For it is plain that I can neither trust nor distrust an imaginary being, a being of whose existence I have no evidence. To trust in God is to affirm that He is. Still, that alone does not provoke confidence and surrender. We do not trust all whom we know. Knowledge of another may prevent confidence, as well as provoke it. His character may be such that we are repelled from him, instead of being attracted to him. They in whom we trust must be trustworthy. It depends altogether, therefore, upon what God really is, whether the knowledge of Him is fitted to provoke our trust. It is plain, therefore, that the statement of the Psalmist must not be made to mean that all men will put their trust in God when they come to have a right knowledge of Him. Ignorance is not the sole cause of unbelief and sin. The real thought is this, that wherever men come to put their trust in God, it will be because they have come to know what God really is. Knowledge may not issue in trust, but without knowledge trust cannot be. There is nothing magical about it. *Faith*, or trust, is not a supernatural gift of God, bestowed or withheld at His pleasure; it is His gift only so far as His enlightened Spirit is His gift, only so far as a true knowledge of what God is is the gift of God. Three conceptions of God we can trace in the history of the world; but of these three there is only one, the Christian conception, which provokes to sweet and sunny trust. We may think of God as the embodiment of almighty power, personally indifferent whether He creates or destroys, with countenance as cold, as impassive, as that of the Egyptian Sphinx, eternally rigid in His will, eternally frigid in His emotions, without either smiles or tears, without hate and without love. Or we may think of Him as the embodiment of almighty energy, rooted in and confluent with eternal reason and absolute justice, never Himself guilty of folly or of wrong, keeping Himself beyond the reach of deserved reproach, but enforcing His law with pitiless severity, claiming His pound of flesh, whether the surgery kills or cures, exacting the debt to the last farthing, deaf to all entreaty, granting no reprieve, proffering no help. Or, we may think of Him as in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, as righteousness and love incarnate. The first repels; the second chills; the third alone attracts and warms. The first is a monster of cruelty; the second is an iceberg; the third alone is a life-giving sun. The first deifies power; the second deifies reason; the third deifies love, love carrying the cross in its heart, and which is indifferent to none. The gods of paganism simply represented superior power and cunning. They were greater than men, but they were no better than men. *Faith* in the gods there was none, and there could not be. And it is not otherwise with that more refined conception of God which identifies Him with force, the energy by which all things are constituted, without personal consciousness and without moral qualities, without either love or hate, without either vice or virtue, hearing no prayer, rewarding no obedience, punishing no disobedience. Such a god is only a god in name. He does not care for me; He does not know what care is, and how then can I care for Him; how can I bring myself to trust in Him? Nor is the case much better with that truer and deeper

conception of God which identifies Him with the absolute reason and the moral order of the universe. It was impossible for thoughtful men to rest in a conception of God which robbed Him of thought and character. The law of cause and effect asserted itself. The ground of the universe must be possessed of all that appears in the universe. But there is thought, at least in me, and there is conscience, at least in me. And if these be in me, they must be in the First and Universal Cause of all things, whether that cause be regarded as distinct from the universe or not. And so, even the ancients came to look upon the universe as embodied reason and justice. Things were not loose and disjointed; they were compact and ordered. Plato regarded the Idea as formative and eternal energy. Aristotle dilates at length, and with warmth of eloquence, upon the universal presence of design. Science has itself dug the grave of vulgar materialism. A rational origin and a moral end of the universe are everywhere recognised. The very word "evolution" is a confession of universal reason and of orderly movement. Neither the old nor the new philosophical theism can produce faith. It is like an iceberg, majestic and imposing, but chilling the air. It may produce, it has produced, moral awe and resignation to one's lot; but it has not produced, and it cannot produce, trust—with the quiet heart and the radiant face and the laughing, singing lips. It may produce Ecclesiastes, but it cannot write Psalm xxiii. For in all this reign of reason it discovers no indulgence for ignorance; in all this reign of justice it hears no gospel of mercy for the sinner. There is no pity for the weak and the wicked. The name of God is not unconscious and unfeeling energy, from which we shrink; nor is it crystallised and crystallising reason and justice, before which we are self-condemned and dumb; but it is Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save the lost. The omnipotence of God does not make Him attractive to me. The omniscience of God sounds the death-knell of my hope. The justice of God thrusts me into the dungeon of despair. In such an atmosphere there cannot be the first breath of faith. But when you make it clear to me that this omnipotent, omniscient, holy God is also infinite in His tenderness, that He loves me and wants me, that He is my Father, and that in Christ His Fatherhood has become Incarnate, so that when I see Him I see the Father, my faith is kindled and my trust knows no misgiving. "Perfect love casteth out fear." But perfect love in you and in me is the response to perfect love in God for you and for me. So faith will be perfect, trust in God will be fearless and sunny only as we know God's name, and hide ourselves beneath its sheltering wings. Here is the secret of peace; all is well, because God loves me. (*A. J. F. Behrends, D.D.*) *The knowledge of God essential to trust in Him:—*The secret of all holy living is trust in God. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the great Bible proof of this. But how to obtain this faith? that is the question. For nothing is harder to a human soul. Diverse answers might be given. 1. Ask it of God, for faith is His gift. But our text tells another way. 2. Know God better. "They that know Thy name will," &c. In earthly affairs we do not confide where we do not know. And so if God be unknown by us we shall not trust Him. Abraham was called the friend of God—he knew God so well, and so he got another name—the "Father of the faithful," because he so trusted in God. Now this knowledge must not be merely theoretical, but that of the heart. Then such "will" trust in Him; they cannot help it. (*C. M. Merry.*) *Trust in God:—*The Psalm expresses the confidence of Israel in Jehovah. Some say that these Psalms are only patriotic odes, and that we have no right to draw inferences from them in regard to spiritual religion. Now, no doubt, many have read into these Psalms ideas and feelings that are not and could not be there, for they are Christian in their origin. But still we are justified in using them so as to maintain our own faith. For the religion of the Old Testament (compare the old Roman law) had a wonderful expansiveness. No doubt the trust told of here meant Israel's confidence that when they went into battle Jehovah would be with them. Now consider—I. THE CONDITION OF THIS TRUST. Knowledge of Jehovah's name, true heartfelt and experimental knowledge. II. THE TRUST ITSELF—a confidence not for infallible success, but that life could not be in vain. III. THE REASON FOR THIS TRUST. "Thou hast not forsaken," &c. Experience proves this true. (*J. A. Picton.*) *Confidence:—*Names in Scripture are descriptive of character in those to whom they are given. I. THE NAME OF GOD therefore tells of His character. The declaration of God's name (*Ex. xxxiv.*). Now this name of God is different from our conceptions. Some rob Him altogether of the awful features of His character, and others of His goodness. All the attributes of Jehovah have met in Christ. Love, justice—see Gethsemane and the Cross as showing God's hatred of sin. II. THE KNOWLEDGE



OF THIS NAME. It means the knowledge of approval, of heart assent to what he finds in God. If we wanted to get a child to trust his parent, we would speak not so much of the child's duty as of the parent's character. Hence, to awaken trust in God, we are to show the excellence and beauty of the character of God. (*J. Blundell.*) *Vital knowledge necessary to real peace:*—At many a martyr's stake, at many a dying bed, in many a scene of trial, these words have been proved true. His people have felt God near to them at these times, and this is the God in whom we must all trust. And this trust is through knowledge. 1. It is not a commonplace possession of every man. Far from it. What is it? It is not mere hearsay nor any theoretical knowledge of God. 2. But it is the knowledge of love. Love gains knowledge as nothing else can. The world does not love, and so does not know God. 3. And it is in harmony with the convictions of the understanding. 4. It is the knowledge of experience, resulting from holding communion with God. Love leads to such communion, and that to experience. We learn by experience the delicate excellencies of a character, which we could never have seen by a momentary glance; we understand its harmonious proportions which a cursory look would never have shown us. The man that loves to hear the ocean breaking on the shore, will detect harmonies in what is monotonous to every one beside. Now this knowledge of experience or of communion is what God's people have of Him. But you must make real effort to know His name. The mere repetition of Lord, Lord, will do but little. But to utter His name in the fulness of knowledge is to uncurtain heaven, and see its glories once. But if we will not know God as we should, then we are sure to misjudge Him. A guilty conscience makes every one suppose that God is nothing but severe. And then you cannot trust. Look again; would you "see Him as He is"? See Him in His love, in His sacrifice for you, and then you will learn to trust Him. And this is most important, for there is no shelter but in Him, and unless we trust Him we cannot enter that shelter. And that means death. Oh, then, may God give us to know His name. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *The name of God:*—The name of God is the revelation of the Divine perfections, through His works and Word. He is—I. A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR. Much was said in words and by promises under the old dispensation bearing witness to this name. The sacrifices did the same. But Christ was the great witness of this name. The servants of Ben-hadad believed in the name the kings of Israel had for mercy, and therefore submitted themselves. And the Publican believed in God as merciful, and therefore appealed to Him. Thus the Lord proclaimed His name to Moses. And at last that mercy of God appeared in Christ. All His works while on earth confirmed it. And He was made perfect through suffering, made perfect in mercy thereby. II. AS ALMIGHTY. That name is impressed upon creation, but is seen most in Christ in delivering His Church. And in His resurrection and His dominion over the empire of death, and His upholding of His kingdom in the world, and giving success to the preaching of the Gospel. III. AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is seen in His atonement, whereby God's righteousness is declared, so that He can "be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." IV. AS WISDOM. This seen in creation, but yet more in redemption. For in it the law and its transgressor are exalted together. Once the law might have said, "To spare him will be my disgrace"; but the wisdom of God appointed that to spare him would be its highest honour. The person of Christ is the chief wonder of this wisdom. This is the treasury of the Divine name. In Him all fulness dwells. V. AND THIS NAME WILL BE TRUSTED BY ALL WHO KNOW IT. Many have heard of it who do not know it. The way to know it is to read it in Christ. (*D. Charles.*) *The effect of knowing God:*—By those who know God's name, are meant those who know God Himself and His nature. Trusting in God, does very naturally take in all the expectations we have of what He hath promised, and knowing His name is a raising our minds to a just sense of His nature, by the contemplation of His works of creation and providence. Apply to three points—I. THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN. Men stumble at this, that our weak race, which is hasting to a change that hath all the appearance of ending, should not really die, but live on, and have their share in all the revolutions which the world is to undergo, as long as God Himself shall have His being. Consider what we have in the knowledge of God, and His works, which may further us in the belief of it. There must be an eternity of time and duration. Through it God must surely preserve His being, and He surely will preserve a world. He will always have creatures before Him. Is it most likely that God should choose to continue creatures before Him, by giving eternity to the souls of men: or by letting these die, and end as they do

in appearance, and by raising up other new ones in their places? If the souls of men are really abolished, and end at death, I do not know; but we may say that they are the only substances in the whole compass of beings that are so. If the eternal duration be granted, there is—II. THE GREATNESS OF THE GLORY AND REWARD. Descriptions of heaven are but borrowed expressions from such things as we understand, but the happiness itself is something that is greater than we can yet conceive. The fabric of the world, wonderful as it is, is really a thousand times greater, and more wonderful in itself than it is in our thoughts. For we only behold creation through a perspective. III. THE PUNISHMENTS OF THE OTHER WORLD. To their fears of these, unbelieving men oppose the great goodness of God. But consider God's providences and judgments upon us now. Evidently, we ought not to argue that God's goodness will not suffer Him to punish, for it does. (*Francis Hutchinson, D.D.*) Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.—*Dilemma and deliverance*:—Let us note—I. A FIERY DART OF SATAN CONSTANTLY SHOT AT THE PEOPLE OF GOD. It is the suggestion that God has forsaken us. Of all the arrows of hell it is the most sharp, the most poisonous, the most deadly. It is sent against us—1. When we have fallen into sin. Then comes the suggestion, this fiery dart, "Ah, wretch that you are, God will never forgive that sin; you have been so ungrateful, such a hypocrite, such a liar." 2. In time of great trouble. The deep waters are around and almost overflow you; just then, when in the very deepest part of the stream, Satan sends this suggestion into your very soul—thy God hath forsaken thee. 3. In prospect of some great toil and enterprise. When the trumpet is sounded for some dreadful battle, when there is a deep soil to be ploughed, there comes this dark thought. And this arrow is most grievous, and most dangerous; and it bears the full impress of its Satanic maker. II. THE DIVINE BUCKLER WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED AGAINST THIS FIERY DART. It is the fact that God hath not, no never, forsaken them that fear Him. How dreadful to think that the child of God might fall and perish. What witnesses these are to the truth of the text. From Abraham down to Paul. And your own experience, if you will be honest with yourself, will prove it yet again. And look at the teachings of nature as to the fidelity of God. We believe in the truth and love of earthly friends. Shall we not believe in God? III. LET US WEAR THIS BUCKLER, and so use our precious privilege to seek God in the day of trouble. You, afflicted ones, you oppressed with the sense of sin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 13-20. Consider my trouble.—*A note of trouble in a triumph Psalm*:—The second part of the Psalm begins with ver. 13. The prayer in that verse is the only trace of trouble in the Psalm. The rest is triumph and exaltation. This, at first discordant, note has sorely exercised commentators; and the violent solution that the whole of the Cheth stanza (vers. 13, 14) should be regarded as "the cry of the meek," quoted by the Psalmist, and therefore be put in inverted commas (though adopted by Delitzsch and Cheyne), is artificial and cold. There is little difficulty in the connection. The victory has been completed over certain enemies, but there remain others; and the time for praise unmingled with petition has not yet come for the Psalmist, as it never comes for any of us in this life. Quatre Bras is won, but Waterloo has to be fought to-morrow. The prayer takes account of the dangers still threatening, but it only glances at these, and then once more turns to look with hope on the accomplished deliverance. The thought of how God had lifted the suppliant up from the very gates of death heartens him to pray for all further mercy needed. Death is the lord of a gloomy prison-house, the gates of which open inwards only, and permit no egress. On its very threshold the Psalmist stood. But God had lifted him thence, and the remembrance wings his prayer. The "gates of the daughter of Zion" are in sharp, happy contrast with the frowning portals of death. A city's gates are the place of cheery life, stir, gossip, business. Anything proclaimed there flies far. There the Psalmist resolves that he will tell his story of rescue, which he believes was granted that it might be told. God's end is the spread of His name, not for any good to Him, but because to know it is life to us. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. With long life will I satisfy him.—*Healthy religion*:—Through the mistake of its friends religion has been chiefly associated with sickbeds and graveyards. It is high time this thing were changed, and that religion, instead of being represented as a hearse to carry out the dead, should be represented as a chariot in which the living are to triumph. Religion, so far from subtracting from one's

vitality, is a glorious addition. It is sanative, curative, hygienic. It is good for every part of man. Religion has only just touched our world. Give it full power for a few centuries, and who can tell what will be the strength of man, and the beauty of woman, and the longevity of all! Practical religion is ever the friend of longevity. I. IT MAKES THE CARE OF OUR HEALTH A POSITIVE CHRISTIAN DUTY. Whether we shall keep early or late hours, take food digestible or indigestible, &c., is often referred to the realm of whimsicality; but the Christian man lifts this whole problem of health into the accountable and the Divine. The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and to deface its altars, or mar its walls, or crumble its pillars, is a God-defying sacrilege. II. IT IS A PROTEST AGAINST DISSIPATIONS WHICH INJURE AND DESTROY THE HEALTH. Bad men and women live very short lives. Their sins kill them. There are many aged ones who would have been dead twenty-five years ago but for the defences and equipoise of religion. III. IT TAKES THE WORRY OUT OF OUR TEMPORALITIES. It is not work but worry that kills men. When a man becomes a Christian he makes over to God not only his affections but his family, his business, his reputation, his body, his mind, his soul—everything. He gives God the management of his affairs. If the nervous and feverish people of the world would try this almighty sedative, they would live twenty-five years longer under its soothing power. It is not chloral or morphine that they want; it is more of the Gospel of Christ. IV. IT REMOVES ALL CORRODING CARE ABOUT A FUTURE EXISTENCE. Every one wants to know what is to become of him. There are people who fret themselves to death for fear of dying. The Gospel offers you perfect peace now and hereafter. What do you want in the future? This is the robust, healthy religion that will tend to make you live long in this world, and in the world to come give you eternal life. (*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **The wicked shall be turned into hell.**—*A description of the wicked:*—

I. THE CHARACTERS SPECIFIED. 1. All those who wilfully violate the plain and positive precepts of God. Drinkers. Profane persons. Those who dishonour God's holy day. The dishonest. 2. All the persecutors of the people of God. 3. All hypocrites and impostors in religion. 4. All must be denominated wicked who are unregenerate. Wickedness is not a superficial defect, but a profound radical principle, deeply rooted in the heart of man. The "nations that forget God" refers to heathen nations whose gods were idols. The wicked are described as they who "forget God"—in His character as Benefactor and as Sovereign. He forgets the all-prevailing presence of God, and he forgets the Word of God. II. THE AFFIRMATION MADE CONCERNING HIM. "Turned into hell." Note, the place into which they shall be turned; the manner how it will be done; and the certainty of the affirmation. "Hell" describes—1. A place of punishment; 2. The nature of the punishment; 3. The exquisite sense of punishment the wicked will feel; 4. The companions of their punishment; 5. The perpetuity of it. "The wicked shall be turned into hell." This shall be done unexpectedly, suddenly, irresistibly. The certainty of the affirmation in the text may be inferred—1. From the general consent of mankind; 2. From the justice of the moral governor of the universe; 3. From the moral unfitness of the wicked for any other situation; 4. And from the testimony of Holy Scripture. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Hell for the wicked:*—I. THE PLACE, OR STATE, HERE MENTIONED. "Sheol" is often put for "the grave." Not to be so understood in the text, because hell is here peculiar to the wicked, and the grave is common to good and bad. It signifies the place or state of the lost. It has two branches. The punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense. An eternal privation of the blessed and glorious presence of God, and all the joy, comfort, and happiness that is attending thereupon. The punishment of loss is further aggravated from a threefold consideration. 1. The possibility of preventing it, if there had been care taken about it. 2. The occasion of this loss, and the way of falling into it. 3. The beholding of others to enjoy that happiness which themselves are deprived of. The punishment of sense; which consists in the unspeakable torments inflicted upon soul and body for ever and ever. Set forth by "unquenchable fire," because fire being one of those things which is most grievous to corporal sense, is therefore fittest to express this condition to us. II. THE PERSONS ADJUDGED. 1. The comprehensive representation in the word "wicked." A word of great latitude and extent, including all open and notorious sinners. All close and reserved hypocrites. All carnal and unregenerate persons whatsoever. 2. The emphatic representation. "All the nations that forget God." The subjects of the punishment are "all the nations," all that prove to be



wicked. There is ground for this in God's power and omnipotency. The impotency of sin and guilt makes for this likewise. The guilt fastened upon these subjects. That is, forgetting of God. Apply to the essence of God ; the nature of God ; the Word of God ; the providence of God. Consider then, the doom and sentence passed upon all such persons as described ; and use the passage as a caution and admonition. Look at our general state and condition in grace. Look to our paticular life and conversation. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) *The history of ungodliness*.—I. ITS GERM. Forgetfulness of God. This is common. "Nations." Contrary to man's true nature, obligations, and circumstances. II. ITS DEVELOPMENT. It leads to all kind of wickedness. Both Scripture and experience prove this. To forget God is to sin without restraint, without remorse, and without bounds. III. ITS CONSUMMATION. It is "Hell." This is inevitable and certain. There the wicked are abandoned by God, without excuse, without resource, without hope, for ever. Consider this ye that forget God. (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*) *The sure hell*.—Heaven and hell are opposite states of being or conditions of humanity. Heaven is a present possession, not a mere future blessedness ; a temper of mind and heart rather than a special locality. Hell is the opposite of heaven. Does heaven mean the service and consciousness of the love of God ? Then hell will prove the selfishness and degradation of separation from God. If we say that heaven is inward happiness and peace, we must also say that hell is dissatisfaction and unrest. Character is the standard which determines whether a man is in heaven or in hell. Theories (concerning hell) once held by almost the entire Church of Christ are honeycombed with doubt and disbelief, and, to a large extent, the very idea of a future punishment of the wicked is regarded as but little more than a delusion of superstitious fancy. What has brought about such a revolution of sentiment ? Probably the frightful and unworthy distortions of the doctrine, as proclaimed by the various creeds and churches. In Scripture we find no sure ground for any belief in a material hell, but a distinct and unmistakable enunciation of the fact of a natural hell of cause and effect. That wilful wrong-doing will inevitably be followed by its just punishment is the teaching of every Bible reference to the fact. Evil deserves, and calls for, punishment. And death does not change character. After death we shall be as we were before death, or the future can have no possible meaning for us. The irresistible laws of the moral world steadily bring the punishment. I make no absolute statement concerning the great problem of retribution ; I formulate no theory ; but it seems to me there is a truer and nobler satisfaction to Divine justice than the tortures of the damned. I believe evil will be followed by fearful penalty, for every principle of right and law of God demands that it should. Further I may not go ; for justice there can be none, where mercy is not. What God is I know. He is wise, and sees the best. I can, I will trust Him. (*George Bainton.*) *Awful words*.—Yes, so awful that it seems almost presumption to preach on them. But woe is unto us if we do not warn the sinner. The words show that God *doth* regard (Psa. xciv. 17). I. THE CHARACTERS DESCRIBED. 1. The wicked. This means not all mankind, though all are wicked, but gross transgressors. 2. The nations that forget God. Practical atheists. How many do this ? II. THE FUTURE PORTION DECREED THEM. They "shall be turned into hell." There will be—1. Tormenting pains. 2. A sleepless conscience. 3. Mutual reproaches. 4. Unrestrained and full-grown passions. 5. The certainty of eternal despair. Then come this very hour to Jesus. (*J. Jovett, M.A.*) *The existence, punishment, and duration of hell*.—I. LET US MEET SOME FALSE OPINIONS CONCERNING HELL AND ESTABLISH ITS REAL EXISTENCE. The Bible maintains it. But consider—1. The ancient belief is found both in sacred and profane writers. We read of it in the Old Testament. Moses tells of the anger of God burning "unto the lowest hell." Homer speaks of Ajax sending men to hell. And other passages show that the ancients believed in hell. 2. Some deny the existence of any hell beyond the bounds of time, and assert that through God's love all mankind shall be saved. But this contradicts Scripture, and confounds the distinctions between right and wrong. 3. Others say that hell is here in our present sufferings and that there is no other, but that beyond the grave mankind will be glorified. But then, why should Christ die ? What pardon do we need if we suffer all the penalty of our sin here ? And our sufferings would be the cause of our salvation. 4. Some assert that conscience is hell. But conscience was not designed to be either man's full reward or penalty, but only his guide. It is a witness, a judge, and to some extent an executioner. 5. Others, that the grave is the only hell the Bible speaks of, and that there is no future punishment.

But only in 1 Cor. xv. 55 can "hades" be consistently translated "grave." In all other places it means hell. II. THE DURATION OF HELL ETERNAL. Some say that after a while the torments of the damned will be terminated, and the damned will then be saved. But this is to make hell the Saviour, and not Christ. And the word "everlasting" is the true rendering of *Aiônios*. And how can a man be regenerated in hell; but unless he be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God? And for the protection of the righteous the wicked shall be shut off from them. III. IN WHAT THE PUNISHMENT OF HELL CONSISTS. 1. The loss of all worldly good. 2. The society the lost will find there. Vile men and devils. 3. The lake of Fire. If this be figurative, then how awful must be the punishment which requires such a figure. 4. The loss of the glories of heaven. 5. And chief of all, of God Himself. (*W. Barns.*) *Hell God's cemetery for the corrupt:—*"Does it not seem cruel to put a loved form in the grave damp and cold? A wife, for instance, who has been shielded from every breath one week, the next she is left here in the rain and exposure." So we queried, and the answer taught us a lesson. "It is necessary to do so, for the good of the family and the community; it does seem cruel, and death, as it is the consequence of sin is always cruel, yet the putting away of the dead is kindness. Hell is God's cemetery for dead and corrupt men; it is for souls what graveyards are for bodies. It may seem cruel of God to put souls away, but being dead it is necessary, indeed it is kindness to the living members of His family." (*W. Luff.*) *The end of the wicked:—*"All wickedness came originally with the wicked one from hell; thither it will be again remitted, and they who hold on its side must accompany it on its return to that place of torment, there to be shut up for ever. The true state, both of nations and the individuals of which they are composed, is to be estimated from one single circumstance, namely, whether in their doings they remember or forget God. Remembrance of Him is the well-spring of virtue; forgetfulness of Him, the fountain of vice. (*George Horne, D.D.*) *And all the nations that forget God.—The hopeless state of the heathen:—*The time was when all the nations of the earth knew, and acknowledged, the only living and true God. This time, however, was of short duration. Soon after their separation from each other, they lost their religious traditions, grew vain in their imaginations, and degenerated into all kinds of idolatry. As the king of God's peculiar people, David viewed all the heathen nations as his personal enemies; and as a prophet of the true Church, he viewed all the heathen nations as enemies to the true God and the true religion. Hence it is, that he so often blends his enemies with the enemies of God, and speaks of both as exposed to both temporal and eternal ruin. The text is a description of all the heathen world, who are destitute of Divine revelation. To make it appear that the heathen will be finally lost, observe—1. That God, many years ago, gave them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. Paul, speaking of the heathen, says, "God gave them up to a reprobate mind." 2. When God formed the seed of Abraham into a distinct national and visible Church, He shut the door against the heathen nations. The present heathen nations are as ignorant and wicked as the ancient heathen nations were. 3. When God sent Christ into the world to bring life and immortality to light, He directed Him to preach to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles. 4. When God sent the apostles to preach to heathens, He sent them to turn them from heathenism to Christianity. 5. God has told us that He intends to convert all the heathen nations, and that He intends to do it by the instrumentality of the Gospel. Improvement. (1) If God will not save the heathen who are destitute of the Gospel, then we have no reason to think He will save the Jews, while they disbelieve the Gospel. (2) If God will not save the heathen, then we have no reason to believe He will save atheists, deists, and those who deny the fundamental principles of Christianity. (3) He will not save any, under the Gospel, on the ground of their external obedience, morality, or virtue. It appears, from what has been said, that the heathen are in a deplorable and perishing condition. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *What are our memories?—*That we forget is our commonest excuse for any omission, in great matters or in small. The excuse is put forward, not only as sufficient ground for pardon of our omission, but as one saving the credit of our intentions. In the text and elsewhere the people of God are warned that they will be held closely and severely responsible for forgetting God. There is no part of our mind's powers which we reckon to be less under our control than our memories. It does not follow because we have not the command, that therefore we might not, and ought not, to have it. What are our memories? The recalling of things that have made an impression on us. The impression may be made at

once by some striking circumstance, or it may be the result of frequent and diligent attention to some particular object. The ministering of our memory to our thoughts will depend, therefore, upon what the character of our interests has been in the different stages of our life, for according to this will be the character of our impressions. It must be one of the trials of those who have lived sinful lives, and after turned to God, that their memories will recall to their involuntary thoughts the scenes and works of other days, and contaminate with them their after endeavours after holier reflections. The memory must and will be occupied. What is the great conclusion? That if our memories depend on our impressions, and we have not remembered the Lord our God, then we have not been impressed by deep thought of Him. The utter confusion of such a sentence comes upon us if we consider it more piecemeal. It means this, that upon each opportunity of becoming deeply impressed by the thoughts of God, we have remained unimpressed, and, therefore, forgetful of His greatness. Time would fail us, if we were to attempt to show how the sinful nature of man resists the varied impressions he might receive through the innumerable manifestations of the attributes of our Almighty Father. Memory is a minister of good to the good, of evil to the evil, for it is our former selves waiting upon us. (*Archdeacon Mildmay.*) *Forgetfulness of God:*—Familiarity with the words of the Bible makes them lose their force to us. The Lord's Prayer, the Liturgy generally. But this is no argument against a form of prayer. If we are to give up a form because of this danger, then we may give up reading the Bible for the same reason. But formalism is our fault, not that of the form we use. And this familiarity tells upon the truth taught in text. I. MEN'S FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. And yet we ought to fear, for if in David's day, when men were under the law, our text was true, how much more now in our state of greater privilege. See how we ward off the blow threatened by the idea that we are not of the number of those who forget God. This is true in a sense, for no one can *quite* forget God. Conscience will not let him. Not the infidel even, still less the profligate. The text, therefore, tells of something short of total forgetfulness. Who, then, are they who forget God? 1. Those who do not habitually remember Him. Such persons may be respectable before men. 2. Those who are afraid to do right because of the ridicule of the world. 3. Those who think that He will not punish sin. II. THIS DANGER OF FORGETFULNESS presses on us all. And it is worse in us than in David, for we have the Holy Spirit given us in our baptism. If we call on Him He will help us to resist temptation. Pleading forgetfulness only adds to our fault if we fall. Therefore let us seek to remember God. (*F. E. Paget, M.A.*) *Tender words of terrible apprehension:*—Many ministers of Christ have been accused of taking pleasure in preaching upon this terrible subject of "the wrath to come." It were strange, indeed, if it were so. To preach Christ is our delight, the joy of our heart; but while it is hard to preach the terrors of the law, it were harder still to bear the doom which must rest upon the silent minister, the unfaithful watchman who did not warn the sinner, and whose blood must therefore be required at the watchman's hands. None ever spoke as did Jesus on this terrible theme; no preacher ever used figures of such glaring horror as did He. Upon such a subject we cannot afford to trifle. Must the eternal and holy Son of God offer up His life for us, and is the world to come a thing about which men can idly sport or dream? But this forgetting of God. I. LET ME CHARGE THIS SIN UPON YOU. Gross sinners will receive their doom. God will not treat them with leniency; He will not wink at their follies, "the wicked shall be turned into hell." But observe their companions—"those who forget God." Now I charge this sin upon many. Sinner, thou forgettest—1. God's infinite majesty; 2. His mercies; 3. His laws; 4. His presence; 5. His justice. II. THE REASON OF THIS FORGETFULNESS. 1. It is because the thought of Him makes the sinner afraid. The guilty man always dreads the eye of the judge. 2. It is irksome to thee. Thy heart revolts. Thou sayest, "Why should I think of God?" 3. Such thinking and going on in sin are incompatible, and thou preferrest thy sins. Sin loved, God is abhorred. III. YOUR EXCUSES FOR IT. You say—1. A man is excusable if he has not had enough in early youth to impress God upon his memory. You, who have been trained by godly parents, cannot say that. 2. To think of God always is very hard. Have you ever made the attempt? How, then, do you know it is hard work? Your forgetting never caused you to weep. If it were not wilful and wicked forgetting you would repent of it. Everything around you reminds you of God, and what warnings many of you have had. IV. I WOULD PERSUADE YOU TO REPENTANCE. I would plead—relying on the Holy Ghost. 1. By the terrors of the law. In hell the thought of



God shall be as a dagger in your soul. "Son, remember," that was the word of Abraham to Dives in hell, and an awful word it was. But 2. By the mercies of God. He saith, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live." There is hope for thee in Christ Jesus. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.—*Good cheer for the needy:*—The value of a text depends very much upon the man to whom it comes. The song of the troubadour was very charming to Richard, because he knew the responsive verses. The trail is full of meaning to the Indian, for his quick eye knows how to follow it. So will those who are spiritually poor and needy eagerly lay hold on this promise. It is literally true that the needy are remembered of God. In bitter times He will so order governments that they shall look with peculiar interest upon the poor. In text we have—I. TWO BITTER EXPERIENCES ENDED. 1. The needy shall not always be forgotten by former friends and admirers; in arrangements made and plans projected; in judgments formed and in praises distributed; in help estimated and reliance expressed. Such are usually left out of our calculation, forgotten as a dead man out of mind. But this will not be always so. 2. "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." You have been disappointed, in your natural expectation from justice, gratitude, relationship, age, sympathy, charity, &c.; in your confidence in man; in your judgments of yourself; in your expectations of providence. II. TWO SAD FEARS REMOVED. 1. Not for ever shall you be forgotten. You shall not meet with final forgetfulness. Nor in the day of severe trouble. In the night of grief and alarm for sin. In the hour of death. 2. Nor shall your expectation perish. Your weakness shall not frustrate the power of God, nor your sin dry up the grace of God. Your constitutional infirmities shall not cause your overthrow. III. TWO SWEET PROMISES GIVEN. 1. You shall not be overlooked by the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. 2. You shall not be disappointed. Peace shall visit your heart, sin vanquished, and an abundant entrance into glory. Then, hope in God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

### PSALM X.

VERS. 1-18. Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?—*A theological difficulty, a haughty impiety, an earnest prayer:*—I. A THEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTY.—"Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?" Some great enormity was now under the eyes of David. We know not what. He had witnessed many such scenes. They have a tendency to suggest that God is indifferent. Even Christ felt this. "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Why does not God interfere? We cannot fully answer the question, but we may consider—1. That God respects that freedom of action with which He has endowed man. 2. The sufferings which the wicked inflict upon the good are often disciplinary. Faith rests itself deeper. 3. There will be a period of retribution. "For all these things God will bring thee into judgment." II. A HAUGHTY IMPIETY. "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor. See this impiety—1. In its conduct towards men. It is cruel—"persecutes." It is fraudulent—"his mouth is full of deceit and fraud," both in speech—"under his tongue," &c., and practice—"he sitteth in the lurking places," &c. 2. In its conduct towards God. There is here—1. An expressed contempt for the Eternal. "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire," &c. 2. A practical disregard for the Eternal, "God is not in all his thoughts." He is without God. 3. An awful calumny on the Eternal. "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten me." Haughty impiety indeed. III. AN EARNEST PRAYER. "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thine hand." He desires—1. A merciful interposition on behalf of the good. "Forget not the humble." Piety ever breathes its prayers to heaven for such. 2. A righteous interposition against the wicked. "Break Thou the arm," &c. "Seek out his wickedness," &c. We cannot justify this part of David's prayers, which were often as imperfect as many parts of his conduct. IV. AN EXULTANT FAITH. "The Lord is King for ever and ever." David believed—1. In the perpetuity of God's Kingdom. 2. In His attention to human entreaties. "Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble." 3. In His

vindication of the right. "To judge the fatherless," &c. The wicked man is in an especial sense "the man of the earth." Sprung from, living by and for it, and it only. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Man's cry for a solution of the felt distance of his Maker*:—There are many other passages which express the same sentiment (*Jer. xiv. 8*). This cry implies—1. That the distance is unnatural; and 2. Undesirable. Hence the question, How can this distance be explained? There are three sources to which alone we can look for light. I. HUMAN PHILOSOPHY. It may theorise thus—1. That God is too great to allow of close connection with Him. This is the Epicurean view. But no true thinker can accept it. 2. That the cause of the felt distance is God's method of agency. This is mediatory and uniform; not direct, but indirect. He stands concealed behind the machinery of the universe. But this no satisfactory explanation. He acts mediatorially in heaven, and yet all there feel His presence. And there is uniformity in heaven also, but neither does that hinder the realisation of His presence. II. SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY. This says that man by sin has offended God, and hence God has in anger withdrawn from men, and will not return until His wrath is appeased by sacrifice. But this explanation fails—1. Because inconsistent with the immutability of the Divine character. He cannot pass from love to anger, from the placid to the furious. It is impossible. 2. And inconsistent also with the moral excellence of God. Can what is unamiable with man be right with God? I trow not. III. DIVINE REVELATION. It teaches that we by our sin have departed from God. The sinner is the prodigal son. Now, 1. This is a satisfactory solution. When we have sinned we feel God distant from us, and, moreover, indignant with us. So He appears to the sinful mind. In reality God is near him and loves him infinitely. But the Bible often presents God as He appears to the mind, as it speaks of natural objects as they appear to our senses. And 2. It is a vital solution. Knowing the cause is indispensable to its removal. And this the Bible teaches. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.*—*The wicked, from pride, refuse to seek God*:—In this Psalm we have a full-length portrait of a careless, unawakened sinner, drawn by the unerring pencil of truth. Two of the features which compose this portrait are delineated in our text. 1. An unwillingness to seek after God. 2. Pride, which causes that unwillingness. I. THE WICKED WILL NOT SEEK AFTER GOD. They do not, because they will not. To this purpose they obstinately and unalterably adhere, unless their wills are subdued by Divine grace. 1. The wicked will not seek after the knowledge of God. This is evident from Scripture statement, and from the experience of all ages. The wicked will not pray for the knowledge of God, nor improve their opportunities for acquiring the knowledge of God. 2. The wicked will not seek the favour of God. Knowing nothing experimentally of His excellence and perfections, and ignorant of their entire dependence on Him for happiness, they cannot of course realise that the favour of God is life, and His loving-kindness is better than life. 3. The wicked will not seek after the likeness of God. That they do not at all resemble Him is certain. They do not wish or endeavour to resemble Him. There is, indeed, in their view, no reason why they should. There are but two motives which can make any being wish to resemble another. A wish to obtain the approbation of the person imitated; or admiration of something in his character, and a consequent desire to inscribe it into our own. But the wicked can be influenced by neither of these motives to seek after conformity to God. 4. The wicked will not seek after communion with God. Communion supposes some degree of resemblance to the being whose communion is sought, and a participation of the same nature, views, and feelings. II. THE REASON WHY THE WICKED WILL NOT SEEK GOD. 1. Pride renders God a disagreeable object of contemplation to the wicked, and a knowledge of Him as undesirable. Pride consists in an unduly exalted opinion of one's self. It is therefore impatient of a rival, hates a superior, and cannot endure a master. 2. The pride of the wicked prevents them from seeking the knowledge of God, by rendering them unwilling to be taught. Pride is almost as impatient of a teacher as of a master. 3. Pride renders the wicked unwilling to use the means by which alone the knowledge of God can be acquired. It renders them unwilling to study the Bible in a proper manner. Pride also renders the man unwilling to pray. And it prevents him from improving public and private opportunities for acquiring religious instruction. The pride of the wicked will not allow them to seek after the favour or the likeness of God. It makes them unwilling to seek after communion with God. Reflections—1. How evident it is that salvation is wholly of

grace, and that all the wicked, if left to themselves, will certainly perish. 2. How depraved, how infatuated, how unreasonable do the wicked appear! 3. How foolish, absurd, ruinous, blindly destructive of its own object does pride appear! The subject may be applied for purposes of self-examination. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The pride of man restrains seeking after God*:—Christianity made but few converts amongst the disciples of Zeno. Why should it have been so? With their simple and self-denying habits, why were they not attracted by the purer morals of the Gospel? and with their superiority to the surrounding superstitions, why did they not hail that unknown God whom Cleanthus had sung, and whom Paul now preached? The answer we fear is to be found in that little word PRIDE—that little word which is still so great a hindrance to many wise men after the flesh. Amongst the Greeks and Romans the Stoics occupied the same place as the Pharisees amongst the Jews. The very foundation of their theory was to make the virtuous man self-sufficing, and usually they got so far as to make him self-sufficient. In cutting off all other vices the Stoic, like the cynic before him, fostered to enormous magnitude pride or self-complacency, and, as Archer Butler says in his *Ancient Philosophy*, sought not so much to please the Deity as to be His equal. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*) **God is not in all his thoughts.**—*The sinfulness of forgetting God*:—A characteristic mark of the ungodly man. Forgetfulness of God is the concealed spring from which the evil and bitter streams of outward wickedness derive their origin. I. WHAT IS INTENDED BY HAVING GOD IN ALL OUR THOUGHTS? It is not meant that we should have our meditations constantly and invariably fixed upon God. Nor that the most pious and spiritual state of mind will disqualify a man for transacting the proper business of his station. We are here reminded of the necessity of an abiding and habitual impression of our obligations and accountableness to God. The text implies that we should take God as our portion, and expect our highest and best happiness from Him. Whatever it be from which a man expects his chief good, to that his thoughts naturally revert whenever he is not compelled to fix them upon some other object. It will be the favourite topic of his meditations. II. THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE WANT OF THIS PRINCIPLE. The man described here is one who lives in a state of habitual forgetfulness of God; acts without an abiding sense of his obligation and accountableness to Him; lives to please himself, rather than Him who made him. This state of mind is the very thing that leads to every act of gross outward sin. Conclusion: 1. Learn not to be satisfied with ourselves, because men approve of us. They cannot at all look at our motives. 2. If, in order to our being approved of God, it is necessary that we should have such a constant regard to Him, is it not clear that the retrospect of our lives will show us that we have been lamentably defective in His sight? Our subject may remind us of our exceeding sinfulness, and of our need of the mercy and grace of God as revealed in the Gospel of His Son. (*T. Scott, M.A.*) *Who are the wicked?*—The text says that God is not in their thoughts. 1. This is because of practical atheism. God is put out of the way by various theories. One makes the world ten thousand years old, and another ten million. The Bible is sneered at as an old, antiquated book. 2. Ignorance of God's character is another reason why God is not in men's thoughts. We, as sinful and blinded creatures, cannot justly comprehend a holy God. Even Christ's disciples but poorly comprehended God's character as revealed in Christ. Much more in the case of the sinner is it true that God is not in his thoughts on account of the blindness of sin. Justice and holiness are obscured. 3. A misconception of their own moral condition follows. They lose sight of God because they are not awake to their own ill-desert. 4. Another reason why God is not in the wicked man's thought is because of absorption in the things of the world. The demands of business should be met, but those of God are not to be forgotten. Men know that there is a future life, though some may argue against it. The Sabbath is given as one preparative. (*J. H. Hamilton, M.D.*) *The place where God is not*:—God is everywhere, and yet the verse tells us where He is not—in the thoughts of wicked men. This is—1. A notorious fact. Millions live day by day as if God were not. 2. An astounding fact. It is unnatural, impious, calamitous. Why, then, is God not in their thoughts? I. NEGATIVELY. 1. It is not because there can be any doubt as to the importance of thinking of God. 2. Nor because there is any lack of means to remind men of Him. All things are full of Him. 3. Nor because of the unbroken regularity of the material world. In heaven, where there is the same regularity, their minds ever delight in Him. 4. Nor because man has no consciousness of restraint in action. But all holy souls are equally free. II. POSITIVELY.



The cause is in the heart. 1. Fear—the guilty conscience. 2. Dislike; hence men exclude God from their thoughts. Learn, the appalling wickedness of man, and his need of Christ. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *A searching description of the wicked:*—The heart of the wicked is the only place in the creation of God whence, if we may so speak, the Creator is banished. Inquire—I. INTO THE CAUSES OF SUCH A STATE OF MIND. They penetrate deeper than may at first sight appear. It is nothing temporary or accidental that causes the forgetfulness of which the Psalmist complains; the evil is general and radical. It has its source in our original apostasy; it extends to us all by nature; no man is free from its influence. Subordinate to this primary and leading cause there are individual causes which, though but results of the former, become in their turn new and fruitful causes of the same effect. The constant pressure of worldly concerns, even when lawful, tends to banish God from our thoughts. But mere inattention is not the whole cause why God is not more in the hearts of men. They wilfully and deliberately banish Him from their thoughts. They are anxious to forget Him. And the reason is that they do not truly love God. What we love is always welcome to our thoughts. II. INTO THE EVILS RESULTING THEREFROM. In fact, all the vice that exists among mankind arises from their not having God in their thoughts. Did men seriously think upon God they would not dare to sin as they too often do. III. INTO THE METHOD OF OVERCOMING THIS UNHAPPY STATE OF CHARACTER. 1. Learn to contemplate the Almighty in the magnitude of His terrors. 2. Let us view God in the abundance of His love. (*Christian Observer.*) *A discourse on habitual devotion:*—It is characteristic of a good man that he “sets the Lord always before him,” whereas it is said of the wicked, “God is not in all their thoughts.” This seems to furnish a pretty good test of the state of a man’s mind with respect to virtue and vice. The wicked man is a practical atheist. The good man sees God in everything, and everything in God. An habitual regard of God is the most effectual means of advancing us from the more imperfect to the more perfect state. Recommend this duty by an enumeration of its happy effects. 1. An habitual regard to God in our actions tends greatly to keep us firm in our adherence to our duty. It has pleased Divine Providence to place man in a state of trial and probation. This world is strictly such. God has placed us under laws. We are certainly less liable to forget these laws, and our obligation to observe them, when we keep up an habitual regard to our great Lawgiver and Judge, when we consider Him as present with us. 2. An habitual regard to God promotes a uniform cheerfulness of mind. It tends to dissipate melancholy and anxiety. 3. Fits a man for the business of this life, giving a peculiar presence and intrepidity of mind, and is therefore the best support in difficult enterprises of any kind. Consider the most proper and effectual methods of promoting this temper of mind. (1) Endeavour to divest your minds of too great a multiplicity of the cares of this world; (2) Do not omit stated times of worshipping God by prayer, public and private; (3) Omit no opportunity of turning your thoughts to God; (4) Never fail to have recourse to God upon every occasion of strong emotion of mind; (5) Labour to free your minds of all consciousness of guilt and self-reproach; (6) Cultivate in your minds just ideas of God. (*J. Priestley, LL.D.*)

Ver. 5. *Thy judgments are far above, out of his sight.*—*Man’s judgment at variance with God’s:*—There is an obtuseness and impenetrability that attach to the mind of man respecting the character of moral obligation that prove absolutely invincible to all his powers of meditation and research. This inability is of a moral, not of a natural kind, having its origin not in his natural constitution, but in his adventitious circumstances. The powers of the human mind receive a wrong direction. Reason turns renegade, and to escape a hated conclusion flings itself incontinently into the arms of delusion. It is thus that the stoutest intellect becomes the most impregnable. Numberless are the subterfuges, speculative as well as practical, that are continually held in play by the human mind in order to elude the embarrassment of its untoward circumstances; for there is no middle road to peace once the soul has begun to grapple with the momentous investigation. This obliquity of mind, that likes not to retain the knowledge of God, is the true and only source of all the difficulty that attaches to the reception of religious truth. Truth of this description lies no way more remote from our apprehension than any truth of natural science, till it begins to molest us with the sense of moral obligation, and to make its demands on our acquiescence in the form of duty. Men have not generally disputed much about what is virtue,

their approbation of it being required only in the form of encomium. They willingly unite in applauding exemplary specimens of justice, disinterestedness, and generosity, and in the condemnation of their contraries. . . . Our consciences ought not to sit so easy under the sins of our country, or even of mankind. That character in man which separates betwixt him and his Maker, and provokes the Divine judgment, also renders the Divine proceeding in judgment more obscure and unintelligible to him. Conclusion: See the indubitable equity, harmony, and consistency of the Divine administration in judgment. (*H. Grey, M.A.*)

*The unseen avengers*:—On the whole and in the rough, unquestionably sin in this world does not remain unavenged. This is true when society is looked at in the mass; yet in the history of individuals it is constantly found that no such obvious sequence of crime and punishment can be traced. There are plenty of cases in which offenders against the moral law have seemed to get off scot-free. It even almost appears at times as if they were specially favoured in the struggle for existence. Is there some hidden explanation of cases of this kind? The text says, "Thy judgments are far above." They are there, unerring in their action, unslumbering in their determination, but they are too great, too solemn and awful for the Psalmist's sin-dulled eyes to behold. God has many ways of avenging sin. It may in reality be far worse for a man when he is left for a long while to delight in his sins, when they grow round him and in him, like some choking creeper, some deathly parasite that sucks out the vitality from that which it encircles, leaving at last only the mere semblance of life. Trace the action of these unseen avengers. I. AFTER THE COMMISSION OF DOWNRIGHT, UNMISTAKABLE SIN. There are many sins of the flesh that ought to meet with open punishment from the Divine laws which they violate. Yet obviously ill deeds are often not so chastised. Take the case of secret drinking. There may be exposure. Or the habit grows more dominant. Even if its physical consequences are delayed, a degeneration of spiritual faculties sets in. It becomes increasingly difficult for such persons to see any goodness in their fellow-creatures. Tell me not that sin is unavenged when the whole character becomes deteriorated, when the will becomes paralysed, when all impulses for good are rendered impotent and sterile, when blindness has come upon the eyes to all that is fair and glorious and uplifting in the world. II. TAKE ANOTHER INSTANCE, THAT OF HYPOCRISY. The Chadbands and Pecksniffs of humanity, the religious and moral humbugs of the world, how do they fare? Are they always discovered? Hypocrisy is of various degrees. It commences in the bud by timid fear of speaking the truth, and it ends in the full-blown flower of brazen dishonesty and imposture. In this necessary development it is ever finding its dreadful reward. Here, again, the sinner may be unable to understand the doom which has fallen upon him. It is supposed that in past generations the blind fishes of subterranean lakes in America found their organs of sight not required, so nature dropped them out. They may be happy in their blindness, but who would exchange conditions with them? We cannot be untrue to what we know to be right without bringing upon ourselves a like Nemesis. The inevitable punishment of doing a false action is the increased difficulty of either doing or seeing what is true. III. WORLDLINESS. For the most part the consequences are obvious enough of devotion to the fancies and fashions of a luxurious, indolent society. Folk become weary and jaded. The upper-class world has, too, its seamy side. There are not often open exposures. The decorum of advancing age smooths over everything. In those cynical words, "We are all respectable after seventy." The wrong is not done with when forgotten. What if the fires of passion and emulation are only banked in temporarily by the worn-out crust of mortality? They may be ready to flare up in another world. Anyway, their effects ever remain. All that might have been—all wasted, misused, handed over to the powers of evil! How terrible would these pitiable failures show if seen by eyes purged to discover things in their true reality! Worse thought still, may not this deplorable vision of life's wasted opportunities be forced, branded upon the soul for ever hereafter? (*G. Gardner, M.A.*)

*Judgments of life*:—In this Psalm David gives one of his emphatic descriptions of the wicked man, and the fate that awaits him. We in our day are apt to think of every bad man as partly good, and of every good man as partly bad; that character is always mingled. Hence good and bad characters do not stand out so clearly before us as they did before David and, I think I may say, as they stood out before Christ. But whilst our perception of the weakness in every man's character is very good, David's thought is, no doubt, the true one—that there is, after all, in every character determination for right or wrong. The

wicked man is he whose face is not away from righteousness and is content with unrighteousness. Now one thing about this man David affirms. Ver. 5: "Thy judgments are far above, out of his sight." It is so. There are regions of which men never think, in which they are being judged every day. A man's life depends much upon the judgments passed upon him. And if he be content with the lower judgments relating to his earthly condition, he will pass by all the higher ones, and which are judging all his life. In the heavens there is a long series of thrones, growing whiter and whiter, until the great white throne stands above them all. And the richness and sacredness of a man's life depend on his consciousness of these judgments. The condemnation of the wicked is that he has no such consciousness that God's judgments are "out of his sight." How many of us live in the lower judgments—that of pleasure, or profit, or reputation. And all the time there tower above us these great judgment-seats of God. Think of some of them.

**I. THE UNIVERSE.** As to whether we have found or are finding our own true place in it. There is such place. Are we filling it? **II. ABSOLUTE RIGHTeousNESS.** That calm abstraction which we call the right, which makes itself known so really in all the operations of the world. It casts us aside for our perversity or it takes us into its embrace. **III. ALL THE PURE AND NOBLE MEN.** They are for ever judging us, not malignantly condemning us, but deciding as each one of us comes into their presence, whether there is any use in us. And above all there is—**IV. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.** He, knowing us altogether, is judging whether we are capable of receiving Him. He ever seeking us, and we ever either inviting or rejecting His love. That love which beats at the door of our nature is judging us, the judgment of the soul being in the refusal of the offer of God. How dreadful, then, to live with all these judgments "out of our sight." Sometimes you see a man, once content, now full of discontent. The world satisfies him no more. He is seeking the higher judgments. Jesus ever sought the judgment of God—to please Him. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **The wicked hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved.**—*Godless confidence—its mad arrogance:*—The wicked man said a good many wrong things "in his heart." The tacit assumptions on which a life is based, though they may never come to consciousness, and still less to utterance, are the really important things. I daresay this "wicked man" with his lips was a good Jew, and said his prayers all properly, but in his heart he had two working beliefs. One is thus expressed, "As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved." The other is put into words thus, "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten, He hideth His face, He will never see it." That is to say, the only explanation of a godless life, unless the man is an idiot, is that there lie beneath it, as formative principles and unspoken assumptions, guiding and shaping it, one or both of these two thoughts—either "There is no God," or "He does not care what I do, and I am safe to go on for evermore in the present fashion." It might seem as if a man, with the facts of human life before him, could not, even in the insane arrogance, say, "I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity." But we have an awful power—and the fact that we exercise, and choose to exercise, it is one of the strange riddles of our enigmatical existence and characters—of ignoring unwelcome facts, and going cheerily on as though we had annihilated them, because we do not reflect upon them. So this man, in the midst of a world in which there is no stay, and whilst he saw all around him the most startling and tragical instances of sudden change and complete collapse, stands quietly and says, "Ah! I shall never be moved"; "God doth not require it." That absurdity is the basis of every life that is not a life of consecration and devotion—so far as it has a basis of conviction at all. The "wicked" man's true faith is this, absurd as it may sound when you drag it out into clear distinct utterance, whatever may be his professions. I wonder if there are any of us whose life can only be acquitted of being utterly unreasonable and ridiculous, by the assumption, "I shall never be moved." Have you a lease of your goods? Do you think you are tenants at will, or owners? Which? Is there any reason why any of us should escape, as some of us live as if we believed we should escape, the certain fate of all others? If there is not, what about the sanity of the man whose whole life is built upon a blunder? He is convicted of the grossest folly, unless he be assured that either there is no God, or that He does not care one rush about what we do, and that consequently we are certain of a continuance in our present state. Do you say in your heart, "I shall never be moved"? Then you must be



strong enough to resist every tempest that beats against you. Is that so? "I shall never be moved." Then nothing that contributes to your well-being will ever slip from your grasp, but you will be able to hold it tight. Is that so? "I shall never be moved." Then there is no grave waiting for you. Is that so? Unless these three assumptions be warranted, every godless man is making a hideous blunder, and his character is the sentence pronounced by the loving lips of incarnate truth on the rich man who thought that he had "much good laid up for many years," and had only to be merry—"Thou fool! Thou fool!" If an engineer builds a bridge across a river without due calculation of the force of the winds that blow down the gorge, the bridge will be at the bottom of the stream some stormy night, and the train piled on the fragments of it in hideous ruin. And with equal certainty the end of the first utterer of this speech can be calculated, and is foretold in this Psalm, "The Lord is King for ever and ever. . . . The godless are perished out of the land." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The false security of the wicked:*—Carnal security opens the door for all impiety to enter into the soul. Pompey, when he had in vain assaulted a city and could not take it by force, devised this stratagem in way of agreement; he told them he would leave the siege and make peace with them, upon condition that they would let in a few weak, sick, and wounded soldiers among them to be cured. They let in the soldiers, and when the city was secure the soldiers let in Pompey's army. A carnal settled security will let in a whole army of lusts into the soul. (*Thomas Brooks.*)

Vers. 7-18. *His mouth is full of cursing.—Black arts:*—A missionary from Polynesia brought home a "soul trap." It was a series of rings twisted in cocoanut fibre. If a native should commit a great offence, or offend a sorcerer, he proceeds to make a new ring in his chain, so as to form a trap to catch the poor man's spirit. Soon the sorcerer asserts that the soul of the culprit, assuming this form, has passed into the trap. It is immediately known throughout the tribe that a certain man has lost his soul. As a matter of fact, it invariably happens that the soulless man shortly afterwards dies, of course through sheer mental distress at having had his soul thus entrapped. We smile at such traps, but we are all familiar with soul-traps of a far more subtle and dangerous character. In the verses before us the Psalmist vividly pictures the crafty schemes of the wicked in order to entrap their victims. They seek by most subtle arts to entangle and destroy. I. IT IS THUS THAT SELFISH MEN SET TRAPS FOR THE YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED. With lies and enticements the covetous seek to entrap and destroy the young. Soul-traps for the young! How numerous they are! How cleverly contrived! The utmost artifice and plausibility. How successful they are (ver. 10). "Crouching down as low as possible, he lies on the watch, and the feeble and defenceless fall into his strong ones, *i.e.* claws."—*Delitzsch.* How many thus fall! Our cities are full of fallen young men and women. We have thousands of heartless men in society answering to the vile robber pictured in these verses. For the sake of gain they set traps in which the health, honour, happiness, soul of the youthful perish. The whole civilised world was shocked the other day by the discovery that, by means of an infernal machine, a villain sent ships and their crews to the bottom of the sea for the sake of the insurance money; but thousands of atheistical, covetous men, for the sake of gain, are ingeniously seeking to sink the souls of the people in the gulf of hell. II. IT IS THUS THAT THE WORLD CONTRIVES TRAPS FOR THE GODLY. The world does not like the godly, and in various subtle methods it seeks to worst them. 1. It has traps for their reputation. "His mouth is full of perjury and deceit." He sets a net of cunningly devised speech, that he may be able to bring their good name into discredit. 2. It has traps for their fortune. It will "privily seek" to damage their circumstances. It will adroitly circulate reports, frame laws, to bring them into financial trouble. 3. It has traps for their character. They know the natural weaknesses of a Christian, and they bait their hook, set their net, accordingly. He is short-tempered, and they contrive to put in his way occasions of anger; he is given to levity, and they provoke his mirth; he has strong appetites, and they put drink to his lips; he is feeble in faith, and they press him with scepticisms. The world hates the righteous, and when it cannot injure them openly it will secretly. The devil is a wily destroyer, and his children imitate his tactics and seek "to murder the innocent." III. IT IS THUS THAT SATAN SETS TRAPS FOR US ALL. He is the great bandit pictured in the text; he is the great sorcerer whose soul-traps beset us at every turn. What a clever fowler is he! what a politic huntsman! what a subtle angler! The devil hides

himself, he disguises his movements, and in an evil hour men are drawn "into the net." Here he betrays by pleasure. Bates tells us of a spider in South America which looks like a blossom, and insects alighting on it for sweetness find death. So the great foe, under the aspect of pleasure, betrays thousands. Here he betrays by honour. One of the Roman emperors used to fish with a net of purple and gold; the devil has used this net largely and taken great prey. And by many other devices does he destroy the unwary. Beware! Beware of those soul-traps made of flowers, called pleasure; of those purple-lined ones called greatness; of those gay-painted ones called fashion; of those scientific ones called philosophy; of those jewelled ones called honour; of those golden ones called wealth; of those most plausible ones called morality. "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." The devil will lie, fawn, flatter, and do this patiently for years to ruin us. 1. Let the innocent put their trust in God, and walk circumspectly. "The afflicted committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless" (ver. 14). Alas for us if we attempt to stand in our own strength, and take our defence into our own hands! "He that takes himself out of God's hands into his own, by and by will not know what to do with himself."—Whichcote. And in our darkest hours of temptation and trial we may have the fullest assurance that God has not forgotten us. The wicked say, "God will never see it" (ver. 11). But the Psalmist replies, "Thou hast seen it; for Thou beholdest mischief and spite to requite it with Thy hand" (ver. 14). "The Psalmist means to say, so far from the assertion of the wicked man being true, that God is forgetful of the poor, He is, on the contrary, observant of their trouble and vexation; and in order not to forget their calamities He places a memorial of them on His hands" (Isa. xlix. 26). 2. Let the wicked be assured that God's eye is upon them, and that justice must overtake them (ver. 15). "Because the Lord continues to spare them, therefore they go on to provoke Him. As He adds to their lives, so they add to their lusts. Because justice seems to wink, men suppose her blind; because she delays punishment, they imagine she denies to punish them; because she does not always reprove them for their sins, they suppose she always approves of their sins. But let such know that the silent arrow can destroy as well as the roaring cannon. Though the patience of God be lasting, yet it is not everlasting."—Spurgeon. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) Oppression turns princes into roaring lions, and judges into ravening wolves. It is an unnatural sin, against the light of nature. No creatures do oppress them of their own kind. Look upon the birds of prey as upon eagles, vultures, hawks, and you shall never find them preying upon their own kind. Look upon the beasts of the forest as upon the lion, the tiger, the wolf, the bear, and you shall ever find them favourable to their own kind; and yet men unnaturally prey upon one another, like the fish in the sea, the great swallowing up the small. (*Thomas Brooks.*)

**Ver. 13. Wherefore do the wicked condemn God?**—*On the unprincipled contempt of religion*:—How astonishing that any should be guilty of this. Excellence and station and authority shield men from contempt. But yet the wicked condemn God. Notwithstanding He is unspeakably glorious and great, the blessed and only Potentate possessing vast dominions, sustaining His creatures and glorified in all His works. And all things depend upon Him. Some, allured by His grace, with cheerfulness adore Him; others, constrained by His power, reluctantly submit; but others are wicked enough to condemn Him. Their conduct and temper—I. TOWARD HIM SHOW THIS. They have no delight in Him, they put the world far before Him, they deliberately disobey Him. II. TOWARDS THINGS RELATING TO HIM. His ordinances they count weariness, His word they disregard, His people they scorn, His ministers they despise, His day they neglect. III. WHY DO THEY THUS ACT? Not from superior wisdom, but from depravity of the will, and encouraged by inconsistent Christians and by the strifes amongst such. But what an awful sin it is. Amazing madness! (*John Erskine, D.D.*) *The wicked contemnners of God*:—Let us examine our hearts, our lives, and the Scriptures of truth. 1. Look at your mind and you will be forced to acknowledge that you seldom think of God. 2. Pass to an examination of your words. 3. Consider your actions. 4. The manner in which you treat the threatenings of God. 5. The regard you pay to the promises of God. 6. Your contempt of God is manifested in your disobedience to His commandments. 7. The declarations of One who perfectly knows you place this matter beyond a doubt. (*H. Rollock, D.D.*) *Expostulation with contemnners of God*:—I. A QUESTION PROPOUNDED. 1. Somewhat is here implied, something is

laid as a charge. The wicked does condemn God. Take the word "wicked" collectively. Three ways wherein wicked men may be said to condemn God: In His ordinances, in His providences, in His servants. Whence does this proceed from them? Partly from pride, partly from ignorance. 2. Somewhat is expressed. The absurdity of such a temper is seen in this, that no good account can be given of it. See the inequality of it in reference to God. He does not deserve it. See the danger of it. Those that condemn Him, He will condemn them again. And His condemning is followed by His condemning; those whom He despises, He destroys.

II. THE GROUND OR OCCASION OF THIS QUESTION. "He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." According to the absolute sense, this is a declaration of the temper of wicked men. According to the relative sense of them, they seem to be either a proof or an account of what was said before concerning such persons, as to their condemning of God. This is a proof that they do so, and this is a reason also why they do so. "They say in their heart, God will not require it." (T. Horton, D.D.)

*Retribution—the world's old age in sin:*—It has been a puzzle to some good men, and a pretext for unbelief to many wicked men, that the sinner, a moral and responsible being, could rest unconcerned in his sins. Why do not wicked men repent? This can only be resolved on the ground suggested in the text, the practical infidelity of wicked men. They do not believe in God as a just and inflexible moral governor. They do not accept the ideal of an exact and certain retribution. A carelessness of retribution. Moral law is held as an abstraction, and the reality, the extent, the terribleness of its sanctions are actually forgotten. Till this general sense of security be assailed, till this general indifference be shown to be causeless, the instances of awakening and conversion among sinners will be few.

I. EXPLAIN AND ILLUSTRATE THE CARELESSNESS OF RETRIBUTION PREVALENT IN THE WORLD. 1. The world's old age in sin. Sin has been producing its appropriate results, modified mainly, and almost alone, by the fact that men exist in successive generations, and not in an uninterrupted, individual life. But as the generations of men all overlap each other, so that every one includes some members both of preceding and succeeding ones, it follows that each new generation is not cast entirely back to the starting-point of its predecessor, but gains a little upon it. It will be found that whatever has characterised one age morally, intellectually, or socially, also has characterised in a less or greater degree the following one. Sin is not an institution peculiar to any age or country. The same corrupt principle is more corrupt in the sons than it was in the fathers. Is not the world wicked now as it never has been before?

II. THE WORLD'S PROSPERITY IN SIN. Existence is in itself a blessing, and an element of prosperity. Man's existence at every period has had much to make it pleasant and desirable. God, as Sovereign and Judge, has benefited the subject and sinner. In this age the world still sins and prospers. Everybody, almost everybody, boasts of a prosperous world. But the world sins as well as prospers. Is not the world, with all its pomp and pride, a wicked world? Individualise the sinner. He has, in these days, so high an idea of personal dignity and independence and irresponsibility to any power that is not a reflection of his own will, as to have become very thoughtless of the Divine law, and very careless of its sanctions. We may examine the growth of this idea, and illustrate its prevalence. When the sinner is thus individualised and made to think so much of his own happiness and rights, is he not apt to forget God? Consider now the judicial hardening of the world. The powers of darkness and the powers of holiness are at enmity with each other by Divine appointment. There is such a thing as a judicial permission and even encouragement to wickedness, whereby God asserts His sovereignty over free moral agents, and makes them ready, and makes all things ready, for the final manifestation of His glory at the coming of the Lord. One great reason why the world is so careless of approaching retribution is, that it is judicially hardened, rendered insensible to the proofs of its coming, and the fear that ought thereby to be awakened. (John H. Lord.)

*The day of no judgment dreaded:*—Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Pitt said, "I have no fear for England; she will stand till the day of judgment." Burke answered, "It is the day of no judgment that I dread." (The Quiver.) *The reckoning will come to the sinner:*—The wicked condemn God. Why? "Because they say He will not require it." Ah! They forget that it is as true of God's threatenings as of His promises, that although He delays He does not deny them. A reprieve is not a pardon. It defers the execution, but does not necessarily cancel the sentence. And how many men in



business, hard pressed for money and tottering on the edge of bankruptcy, have known too well that the bill which they had got the money-lender to renew was not thereby paid; that, however often renewed, it has still to be paid, and that the oftener, indeed, it is renewed with interest added to the capital the debt but grows the larger, the payment the heavier. Just so will it be with you if you persist in rejecting the Saviour. Every day of mercy here will but aggravate the misery of hereafter, and the reckoning, by being long of coming, will be the more terrible when it comes—as that storm roars with the loudest thunder which has been the longest gathering. (*T. Guthrie.*)

Ver. 16. **The heathen are perished out of His land.**—*An encouragement to prayer:*—Does this sentence point back to the great instance of exterminating justice in the destruction of the Canaanite? It may do so, but it is rather to be taken as referring to the victories celebrated in the previous and companion Psalm. Note the recurrence of the words “nations” and “perished,” which are drawn from it. The connection between the two Psalms is thus witnessed, and the deliverance from foreign enemies, which is the theme of Psalm ix., is urged as a plea with God, and taken as a ground of confidence by the Psalmist himself for the completion of the deliverance by making domestic oppressors powerless. This lofty height of faith is preserved in the closing stanza, in which the agitation of the first part and the yearning of the second are calmed into serene assurance that the *Ecclesia pressa* has not cried, and never can cry, in vain. Into the praying, trusting heart “the peace of God which passeth understanding” steals, and the answer is certified to faith long before it is manifest to sense. To pray and immediately to feel the thrilling consciousness “Thou hast heard,” is given to those who pray in faith. The wicked makes a boast of his “desire”; the humble makes a prayer of it, and so has it fulfilled. Desires which can be translated into petitions will be converted into fruition. . . . The prayer of the humble, like a whisper amid the avalanches, has power to start the swift, white destruction on its downward path; and when once that gliding mass has way on it, nothing which it smites can stand. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **Thou hast heard the desire of the humble.**—*The desire of the humble encouraged:*—I. THE CHARACTERS HERE SPOKEN OF. Though there be great difference between man and man with regard to natural character, yet the truly humble before God are those only whom He has humbled. The humble are those whom God doth teach the plague of their own hearts. He humbles them by discoveries of themselves. II. THE DESIRES HERE SPOKEN OF. The soul of man is a restless principle. The souls of the humble ones do desire. The humble soul wants a clearer inward witness of his adoption; a renewed application of the blood of Christ to his conscience; a deeper sense of his acceptance in the Beloved; a closer walk with God. III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS HERE SPOKEN OF. Three expressed in the text—1. “Thou hast heard the desire of the humble.” 2. “Thou wilt prepare their heart.” 3. “Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear.” (*J. Evans.*) *The desire of the humble:*—I. HERE IS A CHARACTER DESCRIBED—“the humble.” It is a characteristic of all Christians. Humility befits us if we regard—1. The meanness of our origin—“dust.” 2. Our sinfulness. 3. That pride is hateful in the sight of God. What evil it has wrought; how unwarrantable it is. 4. But God hears the desire of the humble. What is that desire? It is to know the want of Himself. To have an interest in Christ. To think highly of others. To adore the goodness of God, and to be obedient to His will. II. GOD PREPARES SUCH A HEART. 1. By giving conviction of sin. 2. By encouraging trust in Christ. 3. By giving desire after holiness. 4. By emptying him of self. III. GOD HEARS AND ANSWERS PRAYER. 1. Because they come in Christ’s name. Because—2. He is their Father. 3. He Himself has bidden us pray; and 4. Prepared their hearts to do so. He who will not pray has no excuse. (*T. Scott, M.A.*) *Thought-reading extraordinary:*—I. THE LOWLIEST FORM OF PRAYER MAY BE MOST TRUE AND ACCEPTABLE. “The desire of the humble.” It is only a desire. It may not be uttered. Many prayers are very prettily expressed, in fact, so grandly that their tawdry fineries will not be tolerated in heaven. God will say, “They were meant for men, let men hear them.” The desire of the humble may not be recommended by any conscious attainments. If your stock-in-trade is made up of empty vessels, and little else, the Lord can deal with you as He did with the prophet’s widow, “who had empty vessels not a few.” Your little oil of grace He can multiply till every vessel is filled; and you may have no confident expectation. I would chide your unbelief, but I would encourage your

desires, for that desire which God hears is not to be despised. Note that it is "the desire of the humble." It has this advantage about it that it is free from pride. Now, to be humble is a sweet thing; there is no lovelier spot on the road to the Celestial City than the Valley of Humiliation: he that dwells in it dwells among flowers and birds, and may sing all day long. The desire of the humble is saturated with a gospel spirit, and therefore is acceptable to God. II. AND HE IS QUICK TO HEAR IT. "Thou hast heard the desire." This must be a Divine science. We hear much about thought-reading now. Whatever this may be, here is a wonderful instance of it with the Lord. It is an act which God has exercised in all ages. "Thou hast heard," &c. It is a matter of frequent fact, the record of a deed. III. THE HEART IS THE MAIN MATTER IN PRAYER. Desires are the fruit of the heart. "Thou wilt prepare their heart." When a fair wind fills the sails of desire, then make all possible headway. IV. GOD HIMSELF PREPARES THE HEARTS OF HIS PEOPLE. "Thou wilt prepare their heart." I am rejoiced at this statement, because preparation is such an important business. And it is often difficult as it is important. Surely none but the Lord can prepare the heart for prayer. One old writer says it is far harder work to raise the big bell into the steeple than to ring it when it is there. This witness is true. In that uplifting of the heart lies the work and the labour. Now, God prepares the heart by restraining wandering thought, by giving us deep sense of need, and by working in us strong faith. V. PRAYER FROM PREPARED HEARTS MUST BE HEARD. "Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear." He will, for if God had love enough to prepare your heart He has grace enough to give you the blessing. His goodness and faithfulness ensure that He will. Where God leads you to pray, He means you to receive. Be comforted, therefore, you beginners in prayer. God is inclining His ear to catch the faintest moan of your spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gracious desires and prayers of the humble*:—Lord Bolingbroke once asked Lady Huntingdon how she reconciled prayer to God for particular blessings with absolute resignation to the Divine will. "Very easy," answered her ladyship; "just as if I were to offer a petition to a monarch of whose kindness and wisdom I have the highest opinion. In such a case my language would be, 'I wish you to bestow on me such a favour; but your majesty knows better than I how far it would be agreeable to you or right in itself to grant my desire. I therefore content myself with humbly presenting my petition, and leave the event of it entirely to you.'"

## PSALM XI.

VERS. 1-7. *In the Lord put I my trust.*—*Jehovah the Protector and Avenger of the persecuted saint*:—The Psalmist, beset by malicious foes, is warned by some of his adherents to seek refuge in flight. The Psalm is his response to this suggestion. In Jehovah, he says, is his trust, and there is no need for him to fear; Jehovah is watching all human actions from His heavenly sanctuary, and it is certain that He will eventually overwhelm the ungodly in a terrible ruin, and cheer with the light of His countenance the righteous whom He has proved in the furnace of adversity. The Psalm is Davidic by title, and may perhaps be assigned to the period when David's life was imperilled by the rebellion of Absalom. (*A. C. Jennings and W. H. Lowe.*) *Safety in God*:—The singer is in danger of his life, and timorous and faint-hearted counsellors would fain persuade him to seek safety in flight. But full of unshaken faith in God, he rejects their counsel, believing that Jehovah, the righteous King, though He tries His servants, does not forsake them. Not the righteous, but the wicked have need to fear. The Psalm is so short and so general in its character that it is not easy to say to what circumstances in David's life it should be referred. The choice seems, however, to lie between his persecution by Saul and the rebellion of his son Absalom. Delitzsch decides for the last, and thinks the counsel (ver. 1), "Flee to your mountain," comes from the mouth of friends, who were anxious to persuade the king to betake himself, as he had before done when hunted by Saul, to the "rocks of the wild goats." The expression (ver. 3), "When the foundations are destroyed," points to a time when lawful authority was subverted. (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*) *Faith's answer to timid counsellors*:—The structure of the Psalm is simple and striking. There are two vividly contrasted halves: the first gives the suggestions of timid counsellors, who see only along the low levels of earth; the

second, the brave answer of faith which looks up into heaven. Vers. 1-3. The Psalmist begins with an utterance of faith, which makes him recoil with wonder and aversion from the cowardly, well-meant counsels of his friends. The metaphor of flight to a stronghold, which is in the word for trust, obviously colours the context, for what can be more absurd than that he who has sought and found shelter in God Himself should listen to the whisperings of his own heart, or to the advice of friends, and hurry to some other hiding-place? Safe in God, the Psalmist wonders why such advice should be given, and his question expresses its irrationality, and his rejection of it. Have we here a good man's dialogue with himself? Were there no voices in him: the voice of sense which spoke to the soul, and that of the soul which spoke authoritatively to the sense? . . . The timid counsel is enforced by two considerations: the danger of remaining a mark for the stealthy foe, and the nobler thought of the hopelessness of resistance, and therefore the quixotism of sacrificing one's self in a prolongation of it. Prudent advice, when the prudence is only inspired by sense, is generally foolish; and the only reasonable attitude is obstinate hopefulness and brave adherence to duty. In the second part the poet opposes to the picture drawn by fear the vision of the opened heaven and the throned Jehovah. To the eyes that have seen that vision, and before which it ever burns, all earthly sorrows and dangers seem small. There is necessarily in the Divine nature an aversion to evil, and to the man who has so completely given himself over to it as to "love" it. Retribution, not forgiveness, is here the conception of the relations between man and God. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Moral courage*.—We have in this Psalm a striking instance of Christian heroism. The Psalmist is found in circumstances of great moral perplexity and personal danger, but he stands his ground, trusting in God. I. THE SEVERITY OF HIS TRIAL. David's timid counsellors bring before him several pressing reasons why he should despair of his cause, and retire from the scene of conflict. 1. The desperate designs of his enemies. 2. Their perfidious policy. 3. Their successful action. II. THE CONSTANCY OF THE TRIED. What were the sources of this sublime courage? 1. The presence of God. 2. The majesty of God. 3. The knowledge of God. 4. The righteousness of God. Here the Psalmist rested, and here may we rest. God loveth the wise, the just, the good, and in Him may we rest. III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE TRIUMPH. 1. All God's people may expect to be thus tried. At one time or other our faith, principle, hope will be thus severely tested. 2. Let us at such times beware of the temporising policy of faint-hearted men. It is often a sorer trial for faith to withstand the pleadings of well-meaning friends than to arm itself against open enemies. 3. Let us trust confidently in God, and He shall make us to triumph. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) "*Courage*," says Webster, "is that quality of mind which enables men to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without any fear or depression of spirits." I. GENUINE MORAL COURAGE TESTED. By the alarming intelligence and cowardly counsels, not of enemies but of friends. They presented to his mind two facts to prompt him to a cowardly flight. 1. The imminence of his danger. 2. The uselessness of religion. II. GENUINE MORAL COURAGE EXPLAINED. All this did not intimidate David. On the contrary, it re-inspired him. What was the very spirit of his courage? Trust in an all-sufficient Helper. "In the Lord put I my trust." To show that He in whom he trusted was sufficient to help him, he refers to four things. 1. God's authority. "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven." He is the King of the universe, and is able to control the events that are transpiring. 2. God's knowledge. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." He is not ignorant of what is going on, nor is He a mere spectator. He examines the motives of every actor in the scene. 3. God's feeling. "The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, His soul hateth." He not only superintends and sees all that is going on, but He has a heart in the matter. His feelings are interested. He loves the good; He loathes the wicked. 4. God's retribution. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares," &c. Such is the God he trusted in. One who has moral feelings, who recoils from the wrong and sympathises with the right. One who will exercise a righteous retribution. Who that trusts in such a God as this need fear? (*Homilist.*) *A song in the night*.—The environment of the Psalm is stormy. The singer is a soul in difficulty. He is the victim of relentless antagonists. It is a song in the night. I. INADEQUATE RESOURCES. The Psalmist hears the voices of counsellors. They are urging him to get away from the exposed plains to the strongholds. But to the Psalmist the suggested defences are inadequate. The enemy can reach him there. Against these imperfect defences the Psalmist proclaims his own confident boast, "In



the Lord put I my trust." Look at some of our suggested refuges. Take up literature, music, science, or art. All such suggested strongholds are inadequate.

**II. THE ALL-SUFFICIENT SECURITY.** Upon what, then, shall the driven soul depend? "In the Lord put I my trust." The Psalmist enumerates some of the foundations upon which his joyful confidence is built. See some stones of the grand foundation—the Lord's immanence, the Lord's sovereignty, the Lord's discernments, the Lord's repulsions, the Lord's purposes. (*J. H. Jowett, M. A.*)

*Trust in the Lord:*—Birds of high flight and of great strength make their nests in mountains. When these creatures are alarmed and desire a place of refuge you find them flying not to the valley, but to the mountain. Every man is liable to fearfulness and alarm. And every man has his mountain—wealth, friends, patronage. The man of God has his mountain in God. Many a good man forgets this, and advises others by his fears rather than by his faith. David is speaking of such people, for such have given him bad advice.

**I. THE PROPER INFLUENCE OF TRUSTING IN GOD.** It should give you a firm adherence to that which you feel to be right. The man who trusts in God keeps from doing anything until he sees the right thing to be done. The effect of this is the production of peace of mind—calmness of spirit.

**II. GOD DOES NOT DISTURB THIS QUIETNESS, BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO DO.** Not Satan and his angels only, but also your fellow-men. Do not put the blame of every mischief on Satan. We are our own satans very frequently. Whatever use a man may make of friends, neighbours, and religious advisers he will take care that they never come between him and God.

**III. INFER YOUR DUTY FROM YOUR PRINCIPLES.** Whatever is consistent with trust you may do. The application of the principle of trust will keep you consistent, and will settle ten thousand matters that otherwise would perplex you. (*Samuel Martin.*)

*The secret of faith's victory:*—The exercise of genuine faith is frequently involved in a conflict with unbelief; and they not seldom get entangled one with the other, like wrestlers, so that they can scarce be distinguished. Just such a struggle is set forth in this Psalm. It tells of David's experience as a believer assaulted by suspicions and fears and perplexities prompted within him by unbelief.

**I. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ASSAULT WAS MADE (vers. 1-3).** We cannot tell the circumstances which occasioned their suggestions. But the danger represented was well-nigh desperate. The very foundations of his safety were threatened. Then it was said to him, "Flee, flee as a bird to your mountain." The suggestion was insidious in form, of a prudent and very practical hint for self-preservation. And yet it was alien to his faith. That was not disturbed in its depths where it was anchored on the Lord. Their suggestions did indeed ruffle his feelings, but did not make him doubt the truths of his faith. Hence he avows his trust. "In the Lord put I my trust." "How dare ye say to my soul, flee?"

**II. HOW HE MET THE ASSAULTS OF UNBELIEF.** By turning his gaze outwards and upwards to the Lord. From Him he derived all the power wherewith to meet their assaults.

**III. THE PSALM MAY BE TAKEN AS A DIALOGUE.**

1. The suggestion to "flee" is met by asking how they dare to say that when "the Lord is in His holy temple."
2. That "the wicked bend their bow" is met by the thought, "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." As if He could not see!
3. "That the foundations were destroyed," by the thought that if they were the Lord was dealing with him; "the Lord trieth the righteous"; and "I put my trust in Him," "who of old laid the foundations of the earth," in Him the Eternal. Then, should such a man as I flee?

**IV. LESSONS.**

1. Dread and resist the faintest whisper of retreat, whatever be the troubles and dangers of your course.
2. Live much aloft in communion with the Divine object of a victorious faith. (*Robert R. Muir.*)

*Confidence in God:*—The utter helplessness in which David's soul was plunged may be inferred from the advice which his friends had kindly, yet foolishly, tendered to him. They had advised him to flee as a bird to the mountains; in other words, they had advised flight from trouble,—the coward's cure for the distresses of life. The quality of David's spirit is seen from the answer which he returned to this mean counsel. It was absolutely intolerable to him, creating in him a sense of revulsion and utter disdain. There is only one flight possible to the truly good man, and that is a flight towards the Lord, his Infinite Deliverer. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The suggestion made by the friends of David shows their own irreligiousness, and shows indeed all that the world has to offer to the soul when it is in its last extremity. In the case of the Christian there is no need to invent any religious alleviation of trouble, for that alleviation is abundantly supplied by the promises of God, which are exceedingly great and

precious, never so great as when greatly needed, and never so precious as when every other voice is silenced, and all the world confesses itself to be unable to touch effectually the tremendous agony. It is beautiful to notice how an assault of this kind is repelled by the very character of David. "In the Lord put I my trust." That was the solidity of his character. Outwardly he was troubled enough; waves and billows were rushing upon him in great storms, so rapidly that he had not time to lift up his head and open his eyes upon the fair scene that was above; but inwardly there was a religious trust which made him what he was—a secret, unflinching, abounding confidence in the living God; all this confidence seemed to the outward observer to be eclipsed and indeed destroyed, but it was still there, making David's heart strong amidst all the temptation and wrath which turned his life into daily suffering. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The mission of trial*:—It is very remarkable that this world has always hated the good and loved the evil; but it has always been so. The world and the Church are perpetual and eternal enemies. Darkness and light continually are opposed to one another. If we look down the list of God's servants from the first, we find it as an invariable rule that the world has ever hated them in their generation. Men cast them out of whom the world was not worthy. Still, they all maintained their faith in God; each could say with the Psalmist, to the close of his life, "In the Lord put I my trust." And God has never forsaken them that trust in Him. Sorrows may fall thick around them at times, trials grievous to be borne, and divers temptations may come upon them; but all these things tend only to strengthen faith in them that are saved. If a man enjoys all good things on earth—great prosperity, continual ease, nothing to vex him—then it needs, we know not what an amount of grace, and what years of careful training in himself, and of prayer and watchfulness, to keep that man from falling away. There are so few of us who would really love and serve God if we met with no trials in life, that in His great mercy God sends these things, first upon one, and then upon another amongst us. It is out of love to us He does so. No less true is this principle of faith, and trust, and security as applied to a nation, as it is to a church, or to each individual Christian among us. It is the secret of all national security, and prosperity, and peace. (*W. J. Stracey, M.A.*) *Flee as a bird to your mountain*.—*Times for flight*:—It is by no means always an easy question for the good man to decide when he shall flee, and when resist, the storm of immorality and irreligion that may be prevailing in the community to which he belongs. He may err as widely in precipitating the time for doing a thing as he can in allowing the time to pass by unimproved. It is as much the part of a good general to know when to halt as when to advance; when to retreat as when to attack; when to save life as when to cast it away. The only question for him to settle is, which course for the time being will, in the end, best promote the cause he has in hand. Our Lord both spoke and acted on this principle, counselling His disciples at one time to save themselves by flight, at another to remain at their post, even at the cost of their lives. He counselled them to determine their line of conduct, not by its consequences to themselves, but by its consequences to the cause in which they were identified. If flight would best promote its interests, they were to flee; if remaining at their posts, they were to remain; and, if needs be, die there. Many a bishop in the primitive Church did this; fleeing, so long as flight could best serve their Master's cause; but when it demanded the surrender of their lives, giving themselves up freely to martyrdom. David, for years after he had been divinely designated to the throne of Israel, fled before his persecutors like a terrified bird. In this Psalm his affairs are no longer as they have been. The time has come when the cause with which he has identified himself can no longer be promoted by his flight. It demands champions and defenders, and it may be martyrs. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

Vers. 3, 4. *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*—*Christian firmness in evil times*:—We have here a description of a faithful heart in time of trial declaring itself resolved to trust on God alone, when some would advise it to fly or to draw back. No man need despair; but still, when the foundations are assailed, and perhaps (humanly speaking) destroyed, it is the plain duty of believers to consider what they ought to do; to consider how they may most effectually, under God's blessing, join hands with Him in maintaining, against the world, the cause of true religion in His Church and household. If our lot is cast in times and places when and where the truth as such is slighted and set aside, it is easy to see that, so far as such opinions prevail, the foundations are destroyed. If men come to think it of small consequence whether or not they embrace and hold fast Divine

truth, they will, by degrees, go on to doubt whether there is any such thing as Divine truth at all; and so, beginning with what they were pleased to call Christian liberty, they will end in unbelief. If men should be led to encourage the opinion that God's most holy Bible is to be handled, judged, criticised, praised or blamed like other books, then, beyond all doubt, however human reason may triumph, Divine faith will be undermined, and by degrees will be destroyed from its foundation. The thoughts of serious Church people are now directed to inquiry into the nature of the Christian Church and the duty of cleaving fast to it, more and more, as the world seeks to destroy its foundations. Some persons think the Church means anything, and some think it means nothing, but, at all events, it is of no great consequence what it means. Another danger is that of mistaking or slighting the great Christian doctrine of Divine grace. Whatever concerns the foundations of belief or practice concerns all Christian people as Christians. (*Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times."*) *The foundations of the true faith indestructible*.—The Christian's would-be friends are often his worst enemies. Instead of strengthening his faith when he is in difficulties, they counsel him to fly. Thus was David tempted by the feeble faith of well-meaning friends. He was sure that the foundations of his faith could never be destroyed, because—1. God is present in His Church. Ever present to preserve, revive, and defend it. 2. Because the Lord's throne is in heaven. By His throne we understand His authority. Not human laws, not Church authority, not creeds, which are fences rather than foundations. 3. Because His design is to try His people. Hence all these alarms and trials. Then we should have stability in our faith. Distaste for profitless controversy. Patience in well-doing. (*Stephen Jenner, M.A.*) *An immovable foundation*.—The "if" comes suddenly upon us. 1. Consider this "if" as being nothing but an "if." There are certain spiritual foundations which never can be removed. (1) There is the foundation book. (2) The foundation doctrine—justification by faith. (3) The foundation fact—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." (4) The foundation work—the blood of Jesus applied by the Spirit of Divine grace. (5) The foundation hope—the blessed hope of eternal life with Christ. These foundations can never be moved. 2. Take this "if" as being something more than an "if." The foundations of many things may be removed—of civil government, of commerce, of one's estates, of all trust between man and man. Now suppose them removed, what should the righteous do? If the worst come to the worst—(1) He can bear it with a holy equanimity. (2) Hope for the best cheerfully. (3) Do right. Be upright, whether he fail or not. (4) If we have a hand to spare we will help a comrade up. (5) He can trust in God that it will be well in the end. And (6) The righteous can commune with Christ therein. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lost foundations*.—Here is the expression of a mortal fear. The idea occurred to the mind of the Psalmist that the very foundations of law and order may be destroyed. This is the most disastrous temptation that can assail the human mind. Immediately following it are all the consequences of a panic. So long as evils seem to be open to the restraints of civilisation and the penalties of righteous law, society retains a considerable sense of security, notwithstanding occasional and even violent outrage. In this case, however, the idea has occurred that the very foundations of law, justice, and equity might be ploughed up and utterly destroyed. Then the question arises, What will the righteous do? All life that is to be solid and lasting is really a question of "foundations." Our inquiry should be into basis, principles, original necessities, the eternal fitness of things, the harmony that is based upon the very nature of God. Whatever errors there may be in the superstructure of society, there should be no doubt about the solidity of the corner-stones upon which the building is set. The great necessity of Christian civilisation is to have a solid basis, to lay down principles which do not admit of disputation, and to secure assent to laws which express the spirit of eternal righteousness. Hence the work of Christianity is profound. It is the honour of Christianity that it alone is profoundly careful concerning the bases of society and the bases of the individual life. It insists upon the foundation being Divine, not human. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Disturbances in nations*.—All disturbances in nations are but appointed dispensations marked out on the plan of God. We may safely trust God to reign in a manner worthy of Him. Do you ask why God's purposes cannot be fulfilled without all this earthly trouble? They would have been, if sin had no dominion on earth. But man being sinful, the way of suffering is the only way for him to pursue. Often have men thought that the foundations were destroyed. They thought so in David's time. But the greater the activity and apparent disorder of



the hive, the more does the fruit of the honeycomb abound ; the more the threads which cross and appear to confuse with each other on the loom, the richer and purer is the damask. See what days of blessing have followed days of adversity and trial. . . . It is sometimes difficult to see which of two courses of action should be chosen. Weakness submits to evil circumstances ; decision overcomes evil with good. Hanani grieves over the condition of Jerusalem ; but Nehemiah resolves to amend it. Erasmus denounced with his pen the evil in the Church of his day, but kept aloof from the work of reformation. Luther nerved himself for battle. When political troubles threaten, what are we to do ? Some Christians refuse to take action. But political action may be requisite, and if a man can see a plain way of duty he should follow that way. Whatever may be the disturbances of the foundations of society, it is the duty of the Christian to trust. There have also been ecclesiastical disturbances, but let us be sure that God will bring good out of them. Let our ruling aim be to nourish in ourselves the life hidden with Christ in God. (*John Jessop, M.A.*)

**Ver. 4. The Lord is in His holy temple.**—*The earthly temple* :—How are we to be assured of the truth that the Lord is in His holy temple ? We have no visible sign ; but He reveals Himself in our hearts, and requires that we should know and feel His presence there. How, then, are we to meet Him in the temple ? 1. We come as created beings to offer a tribute of gratitude. Are any so worn with trouble as to think the gift of existence not worth the expression of gratitude ? Let such remember that here we are but preparing for a blessed immortality, and that our trials, well endured, will add to the measure of our bliss hereafter. 2. We are dependent creatures. Then we should offer our thanks for the past, and supplications for the future. 3. We are sinful creatures. Then we should make confession to our God, whom we have so often and deeply offended. 4. We are accountable creatures. Then we should come here to learn His holy will, and of our obedience to it exact account will be required. 5. We are social creatures. Then we should ask blessings, not for ourselves only, but also for others. The sinner, the penitent, the believer, the sorrowful, the sufferer—all are remembered in our prayers. Learn so to worship that you may ever feel that you have indeed been with the Lord in His holy temple. (*Edward Rice, M.A.*)

**Ver. 5. The Lord trieth the righteous.**—*The godly discipline* :—I. THE CHARACTERS TRIED—the righteous. This word righteous is used for two reasons. 1. Because in God's sight they are such. 2. Because they are such in the sight of men. II. THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS ARE TRIED. They have their natural dispositions even as other men. Though trials come to all, they differ in character, and are proportioned in degree. Christians are tried when—1. They are led to investigate the character and tendency of their life. 2. When special and direct afflictions are sent. 3. When alterations and changes in our family circumstances occur. 4. When temptations of a trying character are permitted to come in their way. III. THE ENDS THAT ARE TO BE ANSWERED BY THESE TRIALS. There is nothing purposeless in the plans of God. We are tried—1. That we may be corrected. 2. That we may be proved. 3. That we may be purified. Learn to recognise the Lord's hand in our trials, and to distinguish between the results of our own folly and God's chastisements. Let us rejoice in the anticipation of a world without sorrow, the "unsuffering kingdom" of our Lord. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Trials and their lessons* :—David was living at the court of Saul, and many were plotting for his destruction. But his support was that God would permit no real harm to come to him, and that his trial was from God. They wanted David to flee away. They said, the foundations were broken up, and what could the righteous do ? You never know what you can do when God helps you. 1. Believers are righteous—by the pardon of the past, which conceals it as if it had never been. Because God puts within them a new heart and a new spirit. And practically, by fulfilling God's commandments. 2. Righteous people are tried. In one sense the probation of the wicked is over. Believing people are on trial. You have accepted mercy—and your trial is whether you will be faithful to the grace given, whether you will persevere to the end. The truth that there is a possibility of your falling away has its practical value. It ought to lead you to caution, vigilance, and self-denial. 3. It is the Lord who tries you. Then you will not be tried too much. The Lord has the control of all your trials, whether they come through prosperity, adversity, bereavements, persecutions, or the suffer-

ings of others. 4. Why does the Lord try the righteous? That they may know themselves, to train and discipline character, to make us more useful, and to advance His own glory. It is God's opportunity of showing the truth of His promise to help. You ought to learn to get good out of your trials. "Glory in tribulations also," that the power of Christ may rest upon you. (*Samuel Coley.*) *The mission of trial*:—He tries them for their own good, that they may know themselves. He tries them for the good of others, that the world may learn how powerful a thing faith in God is, when it has once laid fast hold of His promises. It was for this purpose that He tested Abraham when He commanded him to offer up his son Isaac, with his own hand, a burnt-offering unto the Lord. The trial taught Abraham—what he could never have known of himself without it—the character of true evangelical obedience, that it falters at no sacrifice known to be required by the will of God. It is these testing trials of the righteous that bring out their graces, develop and perfect their virtues. The hand of God is in them all, seeking higher praise for Himself, and working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for the believer. "The Lord trieth the righteous"; only, however, to consume their dross and refine their gold. The wicked have no just cause for triumphing over him, when they see the righteous man in affliction. The hand of God is thus upon him only for his good. His trials are no evidence that the fact is otherwise. The prosperity of the wicked is by no means indicative of the Divine approbation. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *The testing of the perfect*:—Pure gold may remain in the fire a thousand years without loss of substance, without contracting a single stain or losing an atom of its weight. The fire that burns the oak into ashes, marble into dust, iron into rust, has no power to destroy or even injure a metal that shines but the brighter for the glowing flame. Gold is therefore called in the language of metallurgy—a perfect metal; and were we perfect, perfect in holiness, the only effect of fiery trials would be, not to burn up, but to brighten God's image. (*Thomas Guthrie.*) *The test of trial*:—The sword is not tested until the battle rages, the ship is not proved until the storm blows, even diamonds are now so wondrously imitated that the best judges can only tell them by putting the steel file to their facets—that does no mischief except to shams; the genuine fear nothing, fire only purifies the real gold. So trial will show the real value of Christian character. The general is best estimated in the battle, the skill of the physician in the sick-room. (*R. Venting.*)

Ver. 6. *Upon the wicked He shall rain snares.*—*Divine rectitude in punishing sin*:—I. HELL IS NOT ANNIHILATION. Many would wish it were. God's plans and purposes are not to be affected by what men wish. II. HELL IS AN ABODE OF MISERY. 1. Possibly physical suffering. It is called "everlasting fire," outer darkness. 2. Spiritual misery. It is spoken of as a prison, the blackness of despair. 3. Wretched reflections. "Son, remember." III. HELL IS OF ETERNAL DURATION. "Its worm dieth not, and its fire is not quenched." If hell could change we might justly judge that heaven also might change. IV. HELL IS CONSISTENT WITH DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. Nay, more than that, it is a very necessity of His existence. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." God does not punish men from passion—passion passes away; but He punishes from fixed, unalterable principle. Neither does He punish from pleasure (Ezek. xviii. 23). He is essentially benevolent. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 7. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.*—*The righteous God and righteousness*:—"Righteousness" may be taken as but another word for "right"-ness, equity, justice, the being and rendering what is right. Here it describes God. It is the quality which binds and blends into a perfect unity all His Divine perfections. We feel instinctively that righteousness is essential to Divine perfection. Show how this statement that God is a righteous God bears on matters of faith and practice. God, because He is the righteous Lord, loveth righteousness. 1. This will explain a peculiarity in the redemption accomplished for us through the atoning death of Christ. The problem to be solved was, how can the love of God be manifested, and righteousness be at the same time upheld in all the majesty of its eternal rectitude? 2. There is much which is mysterious, perplexing, and inexplicable in God's providential dealings. But throw on all these mysterious providences the light of this statement, that "the Lord is righteous and loveth righteousness," and you calm the troubled spirit to patience and submission. Then with entire trustfulness you would leave yourselves in God's hands. In the conviction

of His righteousness, let us face the problems and perplexities which confront us in the world. Now see how this statement bears on all the business of life between man and man. "His countenance doth behold the upright": beholds them, that is, with special favour and approval, because He sees reflected in them, however imperfectly, the lineaments of His own Divine image. (*R. Allen, M.A.*)

## PSALM II.

**VERS. 1-8. Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth.**—This, according to the title, is one of David's Psalms; but there is nothing in the circumstances, so far as we know them, of his history, which can lead us to associate the Psalm with any particular period. Tholuck thinks it is aimed at persons by whom David was surrounded in the court of Saul. Others suppose that it was occasioned by the treachery of the Ziphites (1 Jas. xvii. 23), or the treachery of Ahithophel, in Absalom's rebellion. But it is not one or two prominent individuals whose conduct forms the burden of the Psalmist's complaint. He is evidently smarting from the falseness and hypocrisy of the time. The defection which he deplores is a national defection. Like Elijah in the desert, he feels himself alone. A taint has spread through society. Falsehood is everywhere, truth nowhere. The heart of man is double; their lips are flattering lips (ver. 3). And whilst they utter slander, hypocrisy, and lies, they boast of their power; and not only give their tongues licence, but justify the licence: "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" Now this utter hollowness and insincerity are very hard to bear. The few who, in the midst of general corruption, still retain their integrity are persecuted, and sigh for deliverance. This deliverance is promised them in the form of the Divine interposition. The singer, filled with the spirit of prophecy, consoles himself, and those afflicted like himself, not in his own words but in the words of God (ver. 6). And then, remembering how pure those words are, how unalterably true,—not like the words of men, which *seem* so fair, but *are* false,—he feels that there he can rest, calm in the conviction that, though the wicked walk on every side, Jehovah will save them that love Him from all their machinations (ver. 8). The Psalm consists of two principal divisions. I. A COMPLAINT (vers. 1-4). 1. The cry for help, because good men are nowhere to be found; and lies, and flattery, and insincerity prevail. 2. The prayer that flatterers and liars may be destroyed (vers. 3, 4). II. THE ANSWER to that complaint (vers. 5-7). Including God's promise of help in answer to the cry for help, and the Psalmist's Amen, and the assurance and hope built upon the promise (vers. 7, 8). (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*) *A prayer of David to God, to save and help him, and keep him from the deceits and contagion of the wicked, of which the world is too full.* 1. A prayer, and the reasons of it (vers. 1, 2). The petition is brief and jaculatory, for he breaks upon God with one word—Help, or Save. Of which he gives two reasons—(1) The penury and scarcity of good men. (2) The great abundance of the wicked, and the licentious times. 2. A prophecy of the fall of the wicked, whose arrogance he describes (ver. 4). The prophecy shows what shall be the end of their dissembling. 3. God's answer to David's petition. Is it so that the wicked are thus numerous, thus tyrannous, so proud, so arrogant, then "I will arise"; "I will not delay"; "I will set him in safety." That which moveth Me is his pitiful condition, his sighs and groans. Of this let no man doubt. In God's words there is no fallacy. 4. A petitory conclusion. "Keep them, O Lord." Without God keep them, they will be infected. Keep them from this generation. For there be a generation of vipers. And ever make them persevere; for without Thy aid they will fall. (*William Nicholson, D.D.*) *Dark ages*.—I. THE GOLDEN AGE OF A COUNTRY MAY BE A DARK AGE IN THE ESTIMATE OF THE SAINT. The true glory of a country is moral, and where the moral element is wanting all other glories are dim. Philosophers, poets, commanders, artists, orators, statesmen, millionaires, do not make a "Golden Age," but the presence of many virtuous and godly men. II. THE FAULTS WITH WHICH A SPLENDID CIVILISATION MAY BE CHARGEABLE. 1. Lack of faithfulness. 2. Untruthfulness. 3. Pride. "Talking big." 4. Boasting. 5. Goodness is treated with contempt. III. THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT. 1. To cry mightily to God against the prevailing wickedness. 2. To protest by word and act against this iniquity. 3. To rest, in



days of triumphant wickedness, in the word and power of God. 4. To claim God's promise, and keep himself unspotted from the world. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

*The moral degeneracy of society*:—The poem is a picture of a morally rotten age. The devout author felt himself living in corrupt times. Hence he notes this degeneracy—I. AS A FACT FOR DEVOUT LAMENTATION. He mourns because of three things—1. The absence of the true. "The godly man ceaseth." 2. The presence of the false, vain man,—“they speak vanity.” Obsequious men—“flattering lips.” Insincere—“a double heart.” They spoke one thing and meant another. Proud—they spoke “proud things.” Cruel—“the oppression of the poor.” What a spectacle for a devout eye. 3. The exaltation of the vile. “The vilest men are exalted.” II. AS A REASON FOR DIVINE INTERPOSITION. 1. “Help, Lord.” So he prayed. 2. Divinely promised. “Now will I arise, saith the Lord.” This comes as an answer to the prayer. “Before they call I will answer.” 3. Heartily expected. “Thou shalt keep them, O Lord.” III. AS SUGGESTING BY CONTRAST THE EXCELLENCY OF GOD'S WORD. “The words of the Lord are pure words.” They are so for—1. They are unmixed with falsehood; and 2. They have been thoroughly tested. “As silver tried in a furnace of earth,” &c. How thoroughly it has been tried these six thousand years, by persecution, by hostile criticism, by the profoundest experience of the good in all ages. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

*The degeneracy of a soul*:—“Help, Lord!” This is the wailing supplication of a soul oppressed with the degeneracy of society. It is a cry for security amid an evil epidemic. This Psalm marks off the steps of social degradation. We can see the progressive descents from the worship of God to the exaltation of vileness. Regard these stages of decline in their relationship to the individual. Society only reflects the individual man. Regard the passage as a vivid description of the degeneracy of a soul. 1. The decay of the sense of reverence. The beginning of degeneracy is to lose touch with God. We lose our touch with God when we cease to feel after Him. It is the effort to feel that preserves the sensitive touch. 2. The decay of the sense of honour. Faithfulness faileth, the dependableness of character is impaired. When reverence is benumbed, trustfulness is broken. 3. The decay of the sense of responsibility. “Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?” The perversion of honour destroys the sense of responsibility. Men become self-centred, and therefore blinded. 4. The decay of the sense of humanity. “The spoiling of the poor, the sighing of the needy.” Where irresponsibility reigns, cruelty abounds. The birth of cruelty synchronises with the death of reverence. 5. The decay of the sense of right. “Vileness is exalted.” This is the last stage of the appalling degradation. Evil at length becomes man's good. He has lost his moral discernment. How can we be saved from this perilous decline? The wish to be saved is the beginning of salvation. Exercise thyself in feeling, and thou shalt become expert in touching. Everywhere and at all times be reaching out for God. Pray for Him everywhere. The good Lord is dependable; He is better than His word. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

*The departure of spiritual worth lamented*:—This text is the language of feeling. But thought and feeling should not be placed in opposition to each other. They are mutually dependent. Thought without feeling would be powerless; feeling without thought would be wild, turbulent, and reckless.

I. SPIRITUAL WORTH. The two words “godly” and “faithful” express this. They correspond with other Bible words, such as “devout” and “just.” They cover the two branches of human holiness, piety and morality. In what does spiritual worth consist? Every man sustains two fundamental relations: the one connecting him with God, the other with society. The individual man lives in the social. In the spiritual constitution of man there are two controlling tendencies corresponding to these relationships. These tendencies are designated the religious and social affections. The religious element is the soul of man's soul; its perversion has been his degradation, and its right development is essential to his true elevation. The very constitution of the soul is theistic, the being of a God is implied in its structure, laws, and operations. The right state of these controlling tendencies constitutes spiritual worth. The right state of both is a state of love. Social morality springs out of piety. This worth enriches a man. It is valuable for its own sake. It is absolute worth. How is man to come into possession of it? This is the problem of life. All spiritual power we trace to the gospel. We would not depreciate other influences of spiritual culture.

II. SPIRITUAL WORTH DEPARTED. Various ways in which spiritual worth departs from a community. Change of locality. Change of character. Change of worlds. What principles will regulate the circumstances of death in the case of individuals? 1. That death

would be always peaceful in proportion to a man's goodness. 2. That death would be postponed in proportion to a man's usefulness. Actual experience controverts both these anticipations. III. THE DEPARTURE OF SPIRITUAL WORTH LAMENTED. It is the language of lamentation, "Help, Lord." 1. Their departure is a great loss. Has death terminated their existence? 2. It is a loss to society. 3. The loss requires the interposition of God. The separation is material, not spiritual—accidental, not essential. The mental bond is closer through the dissolution of the bodily. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The death of the godly an incentive to prayer:—*

I. BECAUSE THERE ARE SO FEW OF THEM IN THE WORLD. Such men are the salt of the earth. God teaches us their worth by removing them from this world. II. THEIR PRESENCE AND SERVICE HERE SEEM ESSENTIAL TO THE CAUSE OF GOD. 1. On account of their example. 2. Their influence and usefulness. III. BECAUSE IT IS SO DIFFICULT TO FILL UP THEIR PLACES. IV. THE GRACE AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD SUGGEST THE ONLY REMEDY—prayer. "Help, Lord," &c. (*Anon.*) *The loss of godly men:—*The Psalm appears to have been composed in a time of great degeneracy and corruption of manners. I. THE IMPORTANT, USEFUL, AND AMIABLE CHARACTERS HERE SPECIFIED. Godly and faithful. The word "godly" is sometimes translated "merciful." 1. Consider godliness as a principle that comes from God, not in a natural but supernatural way. Holiness is the work of the Spirit of God. No man is godly but he in whom God has wrought a saving change, whose heart is turned from sin to God, from self to Christ, from earth to heaven. Wherein does godliness consist? Godliness is God's likeness. Wherever that is, there is a supreme love to God. Every godly man loves God, not only because God is kind and bountiful to him, but because God is holy in Himself. He is a godly man who is a sincere and a constant worshipper of God. The love of a child to a parent is exemplified by his obedience. A child of God obeys his heavenly Father from love. Every godly man worships God in secret. Every one who is godly professes a regard for the public worship of God, and makes conscience of attending it. A godly man is not free from frailties and infirmities. But his heart is habitually right in the sight of God, and his way of life prevaillingly corresponds with his religious profession. Consider—2. The other branch of the word godly, namely, merciful. (*Isa. lvii. 1.*) Merciful men are "men of kindness," such as show kindness. As they fear God, so they regard man. Happy for society when these two things are conjoined, a ready heart and a bountiful hand. 3. The faithful. The truly godly are faithful to God; and also faithful to men. Where godliness is, there will be honesty. II. THE GREAT CAUSE WE HAVE TO DEPLORE THE LOSS OF SUCH PERSONS. When David wrote, it was a time of abounding iniquity among all degrees of people, and there were very few to be found who preserved these characters. The ceasing and the failing of them is to be considered also descriptive of their dissolution. When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and a dark cloud hangs over a sinful kingdom, is there not cause to bewail the departure of such as were men of prayer and of a public spirit? III. THE DUTY OF CRYING TO GOD FOR HELP WHEN SUCH CHARACTERS FAIL. Vain is the help of man. Our help is in the name of the Lord. 1. Let us pray that the Lord would help us to attend to such a speaking providence, and improve it to our spiritual advantage. 2. That the Lord would so help in the present exigence and trial as to raise up others to supply the place of such useful men. (*Richard Winter.*) *Times of spiritual dearth and solitude:—*In the days of Savonarola, Italy was abandoned to its passions, its corruptions, and its vices. The rich tyrannised over the poor, and the poor were miserable, helpless, and abandoned. The zealous monk found himself at war with the world and the Church, and was shocked by the profanations that existed around him. "There is no one," he said, "not even one remaining, who desires that which is good; we must learn from children and women of low estate, for in them only yet remains any shadow of innocence. The good are oppressed, and the people of Italy are become like the Egyptians who held God's people in bondage." *Good men taken from the evil to come:—*Even as a careful mother, seeing her child in the way when a company of unruly horses run through the streets in full career, presently whips up her child in her arms and taketh him home; or as the hen, seeing the ravenous kite over her head, clucks and gathers her chickens under her wings; even so when God hath a purpose to bring a heavy calamity upon a land, it hath been usual with Him to call and cull out to Himself such as are His dearly beloved. He takes His choice servants from the evil to come. Thus was Augustine removed a little before Hippo (wherein he dwelt) was taken; Parcus died before Heidelberg was sacked; and Luther was taken off

before Germany was overrun with war and bloodshed. (*E. Dunsterville.*) **The faithful fall from among the children of men.**—*Our imperfect estimates:*—We must not accept the words of this Psalm as true because they happen to be written here or anywhere. It is perfectly possible for us to take an unwise and incorrect view of social conditions. David did not keep a register of all the “godly” and all the “faithful.” Another prophet said that he alone was left; the Lord corrected his estimate, and said, No, not alone; I have seven thousand who have never kissed the lips of Baal. It is unwise to take the opinion of dejectedness and forsakenness upon any topic. When we are in extreme positions, either of joy or of sadness, we are not qualified to pronounce broadly and correctly upon the whole scope of Divine Providence. In high joy, the glee that all but dances in the sanctuary, for very ecstasy of heart, we may think all men good, all causes excellent, all the features of the times beautiful. In dejection, despondency, orphanhood of heart, we may think we alone are left, and that the gift of prayer will perish with our breath. All things wear a sombre aspect; the whole year is one long November; the very music of childhood is but an aggravation of our suffering. That opinion must not be taken. Within the limits of the man’s own personality it is quite true, but no great generalisation must be built upon it. David did not know how many godly men there were in the world, nor how many faithful; but his experience is valuable up to this point, namely, that he felt everything of the nature of trust, confidence, progress depended upon the presence of godly and faithful elements in the world. That the population of the globe had increased was nothing to David, if the godliness and faithfulness of the community had gone down. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) **No trusting in men:**—To one reflecting that God’s kingdom of truth and righteousness in the earth is to be maintained through human agencies, it is a saddening sight to see one after another of its champions and defenders disappearing from the conflict. The sight often smites the heart of the survivor, as it would have smitten the heart of the Israelite to have seen David fall in his combat with Goliath. Few, indeed, are the communities, whether civil or ecclesiastical, whose histories do not exhibit epochs and crises in which their whole future well-being seemed to depend upon the life of a single man, or at most, upon the lives of a very small band. And when such men fall in the conflict, or depart hence in the course of nature, good men feel that society has suffered a loss that cannot be easily repaired. But how much more severely is the blow felt when the champions of a cause are lost to it, not by death, but by turning traitors; when a Judas betrays the Church, and an Arnold the State. Now it is in this latter sense that we are to understand David’s words, “the godly man ceaseth,” &c. It was not by the sword of an enemy, nor by natural death, that they had been lost to the cause of law and order, truth and right, but by betraying it, and fighting against it. David’s own son, and subjects, and generals, and ministers had conspired to overthrow the cause they had sworn to defend; and thus situated, he appeals to the only power that can now avail him, saying, “Help, Lord, man has failed me; Thou alone canst now deliver.” (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) **Trustworthiness:**—He is a faithful man who keeps faith. Faith is the equivalent of fidelity, and fidelity is what we mean by trustworthiness. We are growing. Modern civilisation is not a failure. But it may be a question, whether we are keeping pace by moral growth with our intellectual and physical development. All signs of material advancement are of little account, if the ethical power of the Gospel is left out. Without fidelity to all the duties of a true man in society there can be no religion which is of any value. It is quite possible for men to make religious sensibilities and religious experiences a substitute for ethical integrity. It is a growing impression that men are becoming more and more untrustworthy. One of the features of our times is a growing looseness in fidelity. Consider this in regard to truth, which is the central trunk of trustworthiness. Men in ordinary conversation are not as careful of truth as they should be. I refer to carelessness of truth, to heedless and rash statements. There is a low sense or tone of conscience in regard to accuracy and fidelity on the subject of truth-speaking. Truth is the backbone of honour, and indeed of manhood itself. In the rivalry and pressure of affairs there is a growing tendency to misrepresent the truth. Men really trap each other by half-truths. Half-truths are the devil’s whole lies. Promises are not now kept as they should be. Unless men put their word into legal form, it is not generally considered that their promises are worth much. Trustworthiness, also, under assumed obligations, seems to me to be relaxing. It seems to me that the sentiment of service is becoming very much enfeebled. Now human society cannot



cohere where a man cannot trust his fellow-man. You cannot discharge your duties to humanity without being in subordination one to another. Society organises itself by relative superiorities and inferiorities. It is a constant complaint that it is the hardest thing in the world to find competent young men who can be trusted. . . . I like to hear of eminent Christian experiences. Change of heart is good, but change of life is better. It would at least be more agreeable to one's neighbours. How is it in this matter? Is there anything in religious doctrine that is an equivalent for ethical Christianity? Is there anything that is a substitute for fidelity between man and man? (*H. Ward Beecher.*) *Godly and faithful*:—A prayer of David's to God for help on this ground—that there was little or no religion, or honesty left among men; and that therefore he had no reason to trust them, or to expect a blessing on such instruments. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TWO CHARACTERS—GODLY AND FAITHFUL. "Godly" imports a benign, gentle, and good-natured man, but this has such a relation to religion, and is such a disposition to it, that among the Jews the word was in common use extended to a man that was exact to all the duties of religion, and strict in the performance of them. A godly man is not one that places his religion in many assumed practices, that do not tend to make him better. Nor he that understands his religion well. Nor he that is very regular in all outward rules and matters of form. The truly godly man has an inward sense of a supreme power that is over him, and endeavours to resemble this being, and to govern all his actions in conformity to the will and laws of God. He believes that God, by His providence, watches over all things, and consequently resigns himself up to His will, and submits to everything that comes to him from that hand. A godly man is a faithful man. He that has a true sense of religion knows that God is true, and so he always speaks the truth. He is severe in matters of truth. He is raised to such a pitch of candour and sincerity that every man who has any concerns with him will soon see what he is to trust to, or to depend upon. A faithful man is he that hates both lies and liars. He is true in his actions as well as in his words. II. DAVID'S COMPLAINT. "The godly ceased." On what grounds did he make this complaint? III. THE DANGEROUS AND DESPERATE STATE OF A NATION, IN WHICH GODLY AND FAITHFUL MEN DO FAIL. Dangerous by reason of the natural effects that follow, and by reason of the judgments of God. IV. THE ONLY REMEDY FOR ALL THIS. Which is an earnest prayer to God for help. (*Gilbert Burnet, D.D.*) *Zion bereaved of the faithful*:—I. THE FACT. But who are faithful? 1. They who are faithful to themselves will not deceive themselves as to their state before God. 2. To God. Maintaining His truth. 3. To the Church, the election of grace. Declaring to them positive truth, resting on the covenant, tracing all blessing to the Holy Spirit. II. THE EXCLAMATION. "The faithful fail." It is—1. The voice of mourning. 2. Of appeal to God to raise up others. 3. Of the soul that cares for Zion. 4. Craving further nourishment. III. THE WARNING—that when the Lord has taken home a few more of His faithful, then a storm of persecution will burst forth upon His Church. The night is approaching. Make sure work of your own salvation. (*Joseph Irons.*) *A touching plea*:—We feel that we cannot well spare the good from this earth in its present demoralised condition, because—I. WE NEED THEIR EXAMPLE. Example is both (a) Demonstrative, and (b) Educational. II. WE NEED THEIR INFLUENCE. It is the good of this world who preserve it from total moral corruption. III. WE NEED THEIR COUNSELS. But God's dispensations are all right. He makes no mistakes. (*W. H. Luckenbach, D.D.*)

Vers. 3, 4. *The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips.—The lawlessness of the tongue*:—The language of agitators is indicated in this text, of men who think to carry everything by free speech, a free press, and a free pulpit. God forbid that we should ever see the day when either of these three great agencies for enlightening, exciting, and directing human thought shall not be free. However much they may be abused, they are still the chief glory of a country. It is not to be denied, however, that they are abused. Instead of being used only for the defence of truth and right, they are often prostituted to stirring up the most fearful passions that can agitate the human breast; to array brother against brother, citizen against citizen, section against section, and Church against Church. You may remonstrate with the men so engaged, but the only answer you can obtain from them is likely to be, "With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" They act as if freedom of speech implied the right to say whatever fancy

may dictate, where it may dictate, when it may dictate, and as it may dictate. Hence the recklessness with which not only opinions, but characters and motives, are assailed. The right of free discussion is often indulged by its advocates, till they seem to have forgotten that men have any other rights. Nor is this lawlessness of tongue confined to partisan leaders, and to those in authority; it pervades and embitters private life. We meet, in every walk of society, persons who pride themselves on their fearlessness of speech, and who, in sheer wantonness, inflict wounds upon the characters and feelings of others that time can never heal. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *Flattery dangerous*:—The philosopher Bion, being asked what animal he thought the most hurtful, replied, "That of wild creatures a tyrant, and of tame ones a flatterer." The flatterer is the most dangerous enemy we can have. Raleigh, himself a courtier, and therefore initiated into the whole art of flattery, who discovered in his own career and fate its dangerous and deceptive power, its deep artifice and deeper falsehood, says, "A flatterer is said to be a beast that biteth smiling. But it is hard to know them from friends—they are so obsequious and full of protestations; for as a wolf resembles a dog, so doth a flatterer a friend." (*The Book of Symbols.*) *Our lips are our own*.—*Conversation*:—Thoughts, words, actions: these are the three activities in which our life is spent. The first and the last, as representing the inner and the outer life, are constant topics of religious teaching; but perhaps words, on account of their ambiguous character, as midway between thought and actions, have not received equal attention. To the thoughtless a word appears the most trivial of all things; what is it but a breath carried away on the air to be immediately extinguished? Yet, in truth, this activity is one of the great sides of life, in which we may either honour or dishonour God, in which we must display our own worth or unworth, and for which we shall at the last be either approved or rejected. Our conversation, indeed, is even more than this: it is a kind of index or epitome of our whole life; what we are in it, the same shall we be found to be in every other respect. It is to this effect that St. James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body"; and our Lord, still more solemnly, "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," as if nothing else required to be considered even at the final tribunal. Conversation is a daily, an hourly thing; it is continued from week's end to week's end, and from year's end to year's end; it goes on throughout life, from the time when the tongue of the child learns to babble the first words till the time when the old man eloquent is celebrating the days when he was young. It takes place in the house and by the way, where two or three are met together, and where crowds exchange their fleeting salutations. It passes between friend and friend, and between friend and foe, between neighbours and between strangers. There is no limit to the subjects which it may embrace. It takes in both the objects which present themselves to our observation in the places where we live, and those which are brought us by report from a distance. It ranges over the world invisible of thoughts and feelings, as well as the visible world of things and men. It moves easily from topic to topic, and may in an hour traverse a hundred subjects, passing from land to land in space, and from age to age in time. If the amount of our conversation could be represented to us visually it would astonish us. If it were printed, for instance, how many pages would an average talker fill in a single day? In a year it would amount to as many volumes as the collected works of a great author. In a lifetime it would fill a library. The mere bulk of this activity shows how momentous it is. But there are weightier considerations than this. Conversation is a forth-putting of the strength of the soul to produce an effect. It may be an effort of stupendous strength, or it may have no more force than the fall of a feather; for conversation, as an instrument of the mind, may be compared to those steam-hammers which can be worked either with such force as to grind an iron bar to powder, or with such gentleness as only to chip the shell of an egg. But whether the effort be great or small, that which it always aims at is an impression on another mind. Conversation is not the affair of one person, but always of, at least, two. It is perhaps the most direct and powerful means we have of influencing our fellow-men. I put forth my hand and lay it on my neighbour's person; but in so doing I am not touching him so closely as if I speak a sentence in his hearing. In the one case only our bodies touch; but in the other our souls touch. Conversation is the touching of souls. Souls never touch each other except for weal or woe. Every touch leaves a mark, which may be either a black mark or a point of splendour. No doubt the impressions made by conversation are generally minute. But all the

impressions which we make in this way on different persons, when added together, amount to a great influence; and to those who for years are constantly hearing us speak we cannot but be doing much good or harm. One snow-flake is nothing; it melts away on the outstretched hand in a moment; but, flake by flake, the snow accumulates till it is the only thing visible in the landscape, and even boughs of the oak crack beneath its weight. And such is the cumulative influence of the conversation of a lifetime. (*James Stalker, D.D.*) **Who is Lord over us?—The ideal Christianity:**—When we mistake our proprietorship we cease to be religious, and we give up the possibility of being religious. What is the first lesson in true Christian religion? The first lesson is that we are not our own, have no right, title, or claim to ourselves; we are branded; we have the burnt-in mark upon us that we belong to Christ Jesus, that we are blood-bought, that we are not our own; we have not a moment of time, not a single thought, energy, wish, will, desire, that is our own. That is the ideal Christianity, the very purpose and consummation of Christ's priesthood, the true meaning—that is, the large and complete meaning—of self-denial, saying No when anything within us claims to have an existence or right of its own. So long as we think that our lips are our own we shall speak what we please; when we begin to learn that our lips are not our own, nor our hands, nor feet, nor head, nor heart, we shall have but one question: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Tell me, and give me strength to do it." That will be the day of jubilee, the morning of coronation. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

**Ver. 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, with the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.—The poor set in safety:**—God's family in all ages have resembled each other. Hence the Word of God is rich in consolation. I. GOD'S WORD DEALS WITH AND IS ADDRESSED TO CHARACTERS. Two such are named. 1. The poor—the poor in spirit, conscious that they have no good in themselves. God brings all His people to this state. 2. The oppression of the poor. Poverty gives room for oppression. The rich are not oppressed. And so it is spiritually. Hezekiah, near to death, cries out, "Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." The law on a man's conscience does this. "It strikes the dying dead." Thus the Lord deals with His people to bring them down. But their sighing is a sign of life. The dead in sin feel nothing. They may have alarming fears of hell, but no trouble of conscience; they, as Isaiah says, may "cry for sorrow of heart and howl for vexation of spirit," but "they do not cry unto God with their heart when they howl upon their beds." II. **FOR THE SIGHING OF THE NEEDY.** A man may be poor without being needy, without having any desire for what he does not possess; he may be content with his poverty. 1. But the needy are they who are not content, who feel and utter their need. This is true of spiritual things. He is full of needs. He wants more and more of the grace of Jesus. 2. He sighs. He is sighing after God, sighing unto the Lord under the burden of his sins; he wants the light, life, liberty, peace of the Gospel of God. III. **THE ANSWER TO THESE CRIES.** 1. "Now will I arise." As if the Lord had been looking on but sitting still; as a father may watch his child at play, but let him perceive the child in danger, then will he start up and rush to the rescue. It is this sitting still of the Lord that so puzzles and perplexes God's family; that He should seem to take no notice of them. But He will not be always so. A time is fixed when He will arise. 2. "I will set him in safety, . . . puffeth at him." Then poor people are puffed at, not only poor and oppressed. Yes, for Satan is one that puffs at them. Sinners do also. And saints can do it too. Then much of pride and annoyance are to be found in God's children. But the Lord will set them in safety. Not, perhaps, deliver them, but set them in Himself, a safe spot indeed. And there is the puff of flattery, and of enmity. Through much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom. But thither we shall be brought. (*J. C. Philpot.*) *Divine interposition in time of great peril:*—On one occasion, being driven from my station, two teachers and myself escaped for our lives to another missionary station at the other end of the island. We remained there for some time, and one afternoon, tired with watching (for the savages were constantly trying to take our lives) I fell fast asleep. About nine at night a retriever dog, that had been trained to warn me of approaching danger, sprang upon me and awakened me. I jumped up and saw a number of savages approaching; they went to the beautiful new church and set it on fire. I called the other missionary, and told him that in a few moments our house would be in flames. He suggested that we should prepare for the great change, for that night we would be with Jesus. He



prayed to God to have mercy upon us. I went out and pulled the fence down that joined the church to the house. I was quickly surrounded by the savages, who lifted their clubs to strike me. Jesus has all power in heaven and earth; no blow could be struck without His permission. "I defy you, in the name of Jesus!" I shouted; "you think I am alone, but my God is here. He will protect me. I defy you, in the name of Jesus!" Just as I uttered those words a tornado burst upon us. The wind blew the flames from our house, and the rain soon extinguished the fire. The savages were affrighted. They said, "Jehovah God is fighting for them," and then disappeared into the neighbouring wood. The age of miracles has passed, but the God of miracles still lives and reigns. I firmly believe that in answer to prayer God sent that tornado. (*J. Paton.*)

Ver. 6. **The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.**—*The excellence of the Holy Scriptures*.—I. THE HOLY DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED WRITINGS HERE GIVEN. It tells of—1. Their high authority. The men who wrote these books say, "The Spirit of God spoke by me, and His Word was upon my tongue," "Thus saith the Lord," and so on. Thus they claim high authority. But you may ask, "How are we to know it?" Therefore note—2. Their inherent sanctity. "The words of the Lord are pure words." And are they not so? Some say the book is immoral because it records immoral actions. But could the Scriptures have given a faithful account of human nature without such records? Those who study the Bible most are those who most of all live and practise all the public and social virtues. Modern infidels are not so candid as those of the former century. Rousseau could say, "I will confess that the majority of the Scriptures strike me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man?" 3. Their intrinsic worth. In our text they are compared to the finest silver and gold. And in Psalm cxix. And this eulogy is deserved, because they speak of God and man reasonably and in harmony with our experience. They satisfy man upon the most anxious questions. II. THE SCRUTINY THEY HAVE ENDURED. "Tried in the furnace, purified seven times." The reference is to the searching process of the refiner, by which he detects the presence of any alloy and removes it. And the Word of God has passed under a scrutiny like that of fire. It is not accepted on mere hearsay and because of the teachings of priests. 1. It has been thoroughly investigated. Josephus gives his testimony to the sacred books of the Jews. Hence the Old Testament is evidently not a book of yesterday. And from the testimony of the Fathers we know that the books of the New Testament have existed from the time they profess. The ancient versions confirm this. The entire New Testament might be collated out of the quotations made by the Fathers. 2. Then there has been antiquarian and scientific research. And these do homage to the testimony of revelation. 3. Philosophical and moral discoveries likewise bear their testimony. All the philosophies of China and India, and yet others, have been searched, and they have been found poor and unsatisfactory, like the glimmer of gas lights at noonday, compared with the Scriptures. That eminent Oriental scholar, Sir William Jones, says, "The Scriptures contain, independently of a Divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains, both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed in any age or in any tongue." Now these are not the testimonies of priests, but of laymen, learned, travelled, and who have become acquainted with the literature of all nations. And should any be disposed to trifle with the Bible, let me quote to him two lines from a poem penned by one of the greatest geniuses that has ever adorned our empire, and whose intellectual light has been just lost to us—

"Better he had ne'er been born  
Who reads to doubt, who reads to scorn." (*J. Blackburn.*)

*Testing the truth*.—The Psalmist is telling of the Word of God, and contrasting it with the words of men. He tells of those who speak vanity. "With flattering lips and a double heart do they speak." He wants something better, and finds it in the Word of the Lord. For in contrast with man's weakness and falsehood there was the Divine promise immediately made, "For the oppression of the poor, for the

sighing of the needy, now," &c. May that be depended upon? May we take heart? Yes, "For the words of the Lord are pure words," &c. So then, we may apply this text to the Bible. I. BY THE PROLONGED AND SEVERE CONFLICT IT HAS HAD WITH ALL THE EVIL OF OUR WORLD. There are two great forces in the moral world, that of evil—the world, the flesh, and the devil, and that of good—in truth, in holiness, and in love. And God is the source of all this good. Now, if the words are of God they will be like Him; which is just what they are. And they will occupy His place, bitter against nothing but evil, enamoured of nothing but good. And they will do His work. So they do, have done everywhere and always, under all circumstances and amid all conditions. II. BY ALL THE CONTRADICTIONS OF UNBELIEF. Concerning Him it is said, "He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself." Just so it has been with the Word of God, and is so now. They have heated the furnace to the intensest heat, and cast the Bible in, and the result is that it has lost nothing but the tinsel of man's folly or the bonds wherewith men's authority sought to bind it. III. BY THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONDUCT OF FALSE PROFESSORS. We complain of the unfair dealing of unbelief. Naturally. But there are others who deserve our indignation far more, and these are those who profess to be, but are not, friends of the Gospel or of the words of God. Worldly men, who have determined to make it a political engine. Hence it has been encumbered with ceremonies and dogmas; kept back from the people; man's own interpretations fastened upon it, as if they were the words of God Himself. IV. THE INFIRMITIES AND INCONSISTENCIES OF ITS REAL FRIENDS. Many of you here profess to be its real friends. Some of you hold prominent positions, and, like Peter and John, you bid men look on you and see what your religion can do. And men do look on you and judge the Word of God by you. And they see very soon where there are inconsistencies in you; whilst, on the other hand, there is nothing so awes the world as the spirituality, unselfishness, and devotedness of earnest holiness. But who of us can profess fitly to represent the Word of God? How imperfect are the best of men. V. BY THE SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT OF ALL SANCTIFIED MEN. In one sense the Word of God tries a man, for according as he acts towards it so does he reveal his spiritual state. On the other hand, all holy souls test the living Word. "My sheep hear My voice," said the Saviour, "but a stranger will they not follow." VI. BY THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF BOTH SAINTS AND SINNERS. VII. BY THOSE, MOST OF ALL, WHO HAVE MOST THOROUGHLY LIVED IN IT AND WORKED HARDEST FOR IT. If I want to know the sustaining qualities of any particular kind of food I observe those who live most on it, yet do the greatest amount of work, and with the greatest ease, and, nevertheless, show the most robust health. And so, would I know what the Word of God can do, I turn to those who are such as I have described. See Paul. Hear him say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthened me." All of you who hear the Word, bind it to your hearts, and let it be your holy resolve, God helping you, to live as well as speak His Word. (*John Aldis.*) *The Word of God tested and proven:*—The fable that there were animals that lived in the fire, called Salamanders, came from the glowing brilliance of some metals that, when they are heated to a white heat, acquire a supernatural splendour, and apparently a new and mysterious life. The metal seems now to live, breathe, heave, move at every new expansion and contraction; a hundred hues, indescribably brilliant and radiant, play around the molten surface. Of all books, the Word of God is the only one with Salamander qualities. The flames of persecution and hostile criticism, instead of effecting its destruction, have but added to its lustre and strengthened its claims to be indeed "the Word of the Lord that endureth for ever." (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*)

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### PSALM XIII.

VERS. 1-6. *How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord?—Distress and confidence:—* This little Psalm begins in agitation and ends in calm. However true it is that sorrow is "but for a moment," it seems to last for an eternity. Sad hours are leaden-footed and joyful ones winged. That "How long," reiterated, betrays how weary it was to the Psalmist. Very significant is the progress of thought in the

fourfold questioning plaint, which turns first to God, then to himself, then to the enemy. The root of his sorrow is that God seems to have forgotten him ; therefore his soul is full of plans for relief, and the enemy seems to be lifted up above him. Left alone, without God's help, what can a man do but think and plan and scheme to weariness all night, and carry a heavy heart, as he sees by daylight how futile his plans are ? The agitation of the first strophe is somewhat stilled in the second, in which the stream of prayer runs clear without such foam as the impatient questions of the first part. The storm has all rolled away in the third strophe, in which faith has triumphed over doubt and anticipates the fulfilment of its prayer. The sad minor of "How long?" if coming from faithful lips, passes into a jubilant key which heralds the full gladness of the yet future songs of deliverance. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Sorrow lingers*:—That which the French proverb hath of sickness is true of all evils, that they come on horseback and go away on foot; we have often seen that a sudden fall, or one meal's surfeit, has stuck by many to their graves; whereas pleasures come like oxen, slow and heavily, and go away like post-horses, upon the spur. Sorrows, because they are lingering guests, I will entertain but moderately, knowing that the more they are made of the longer they will continue; and for pleasures, because they stay not, and do but call to drink at my door, I will use them as passengers with slight respect. He is his own best friend that makes the least of both of them. (*Joseph Hall.*) *The relative changes of the immutable God*:—He is unchangeable. Job says, "He is in one mind." James, "With Him there is no variableness." And He Himself says, "I am the Lord, I change not." In reality He is thus, but relatively He seems to change. I. GOD AS LOOKED AT THROUGH THE SOUL IN TROUBLE. He seemed to be—1. Forgetful. "How long wilt Thou forget me?" 2. As unkind. "How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?" To turn away the face was the sign of aversion and displeasure. 3. As utterly neglectful. "How long?" Four times he repeats this. As if God was utterly regardless of him. So it seemed to him. II. GOD AS LOOKED AT THROUGH THE SOUL IN DEVOTION. In the midst of his troubles he prays, "Consider and hear me, O Lord, my God: lighten mine eyes," &c. As he prays the cloud withdraws, and he cries, "My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation." Prayer changes the night of the soul into morning, its discords into music, its dark and chilly November into a sunny and life-giving May. III. CONCLUSION. 1. The power of circumstances to disturb the soul. While no man need be their creature, it is impossible for him not to feel their influence. 2. The rapid changes which occur in the mood of the soul. The Psalm begins in gloom and ends in sunshine. 3. The influence of prayer to elevate the soul. Prayer is the power that changes the whole horizon of our spiritual nature. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *What total desertion by God would mean*:—When the king removes, the court and all the carriages follow after; and when they are gone, the hangings are taken down, nothing is left behind but bare walls, dust, and rubbish. So if God removes from a man or a nation where He kept His court, His graces will not stay long behind; and if they be gone, farewell peace, farewell comfort; down go the hangings of all prosperity, nothing is left behind but confusion and disorder. (*J. Staughton.*) *Soul eclipses*:—I. THE NATURE OF SUCH ECLIPSES. It is quite true that God never ceases to love His children, but still the people of God are sensible of eclipses of the soul such as the Psalmist describes in this Psalm. God has not really deserted His children, but it seems as if He had. In providential matters they fail to recognise His hand; His consolations cease in their spirits, and they are full of darkness and bitterness. II. THE CAUSES OF THESE ECLIPSES. 1. Why does God thus appear to desert His people at all? The end of God's discipline is to make His people feel their absolute dependence upon Himself. These eclipses teach us—1. That God is the source of happiness; 2. The source of wisdom; 3. The source of strength; and 4. The source of life. Why does God hide His face so long? Simply because we are so slow to learn the great truths which He designs to teach. III. THE DUTY OF THE SAINTS IN THESE HOURS OF DARKNESS. Not discontent, and not despair. 1. Wait in faith. 2. Wait in prayer. 3. Wait in hope. When the trial is over your soul shall be deeper, brighter, and more fruitful. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *A sigh and a song*:—The "salute" of this Psalm is a sigh, the "adieu" is a song. We sight the Psalmist prostrate before the mercy throne, wrapped in grim shadows of gloom, bowed in soul by the weight of a great sorrow, and howling "How long?" We leave him sitting in the stillness of a new confidence, enwreathed with sunbeams of gladness, pealing forth from harp and lip an exultant Te Deum! I. EARNEST INQUIRY (vers. 1, 2). A fourfold inquiry. Can



God forget? He hides His face, not willingly, but of necessity, that we may seek His face. And the longer, that we may seek it the more earnestly. II. DEVOUT AND FERVENT ENTREATY (vers. 3, 4). Trouble gives point, pathos, and power to prayer. Genuine entreaty comes from a soul that has—1. A clear recognition of its personal relationship to God. 2. It is definite in request. It knows what it wants, and asks for it. Entreaty has aim, directness, special need; hence is definite in request—e.g., Jacob, Jabez, &c. Here it seeks the Divine attention. The Divine illumination. 3. Genuine entreaty has powerful reasons for what it requests. “Lest I sleep,” &c. This is from the self-side. “Lest mine enemy say,” &c. This is from the God-side. Prevailing against him would be injurious to the truth. III. ENTREATY RISING INTO TRIUMPHANT ASSURANCE AND PRAISE. Here we have trustfulness—1. Well located; 2. Triumphant; 3. Exultant. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *God's forgettings*.—It is quite unnecessary to point thus: “How long wilt Thou forget me?—For ever?” as if there were two distinct questions. It is natural to a perturbed and doubting heart thus to express itself in a confused and almost contradictory manner. In its despair it thinks, “God hath forgotten me”; and yet out of the very midst of its despair there rises up the conviction, “No, not for ever”; and then its hopelessness is changed to expostulation, “How long wilt Thou forget me?” We may, if we choose it, paraphrase, “How long wilt Thou make as if Thou wouldst forget me for ever?” God’s anger, the hiding of His countenance, as Delitzsch observes, cannot but seem eternal to the soul which is conscious of it. Nevertheless, Faith still cleaves to the Love which hides itself under the disguise of severity, and exclaims, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “When we have long been crushed by sufferings, and no sign appears that God will succour us, the thought will force itself upon us, God hath forgotten me. For by nature we do not acknowledge that God cares for us in our afflictions; but by faith we lay hold of His invisible providence. So David, so far as he could judge from the actual state in which he was, seemed to himself forsaken of God. But at the same time, because the Light of Faith was his guide, he, with the eyes of his mind, looked through and beyond all else to the grace of God, far as it might seem hidden from his sight.”—Calvin. “Does he not portray in fitting words that most bitter anguish of spirit, which feels that it has to do with a God alienated, hostile, implacable, inexorable, whose wrath is, like Himself, eternal? This is a state in which hope despairs, and yet despair hopes at the same time. This no one understands who has not tasted it.”—Luther. (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*) *The continuance of trial*.—In laying forth his grief he beginneth at his apparent desertion; then speaketh of the perplexity of mind arising herefrom; and, last of all, he mentioneth the continuance of his outward trouble from his enemies. Whence learn—1. Trouble outward and inward of body and spirit, fightings without and terrors within, vexations from heaven and earth, from God deserting and men pursuing, may fall upon a child of God at one time, and continue for a long time enough, as here. “How long wilt Thou forget me; how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?” 2. When trouble is continued, and appearance of delivery is not, and God withholdeth inward and outward help, sense calleth this the Lord’s forgetting and hiding of His face. “How long wilt Thou forget me, and hide Thy face?” 3. The Lord’s children, in their resolution for faith and patience, do set to themselves a shorter period usually than the Lord doth for making them have their perfect work; therefore, when their hope is deferred, it makes their heart sick, and to cry out, “How long?” 4. When comfort trusteth not with our time, fear of eternal off-casting may readily slide in; and this fear a soul acquainted with God, or that loveth Him in any measure, cannot endure. “Wilt Thou forget me for ever?” saith he. 5. Whatsoever sense do speak, or suggested temptations do speak, faith will relate the business to the Lord, and expect a better speech from Him. For in this condition the Prophet goeth to God, saying, “How long, O Lord?” 6. A soul finding desertion multiplieth consultations, falleth in perplexity, changeth conclusions, as a sick man doth his bed; falleth in grief, and cannot endure to live by its own finding, but runneth upon God for direction, as here we see it. “How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?” 7. The enemies taking advantage (by the continuance of trouble upon the godly), against his cause and religion and against God, doth augment both the grief and temptation of the godly. “How long shall mine enemies be exalted over me?” (*David Dickson.*)

Ver. 2. How long shall I take counsel in my soul?—*Plan-making*.—The literal

rendering of this verse brings before us the folly of mere plan-making. David is taking counsel in his own soul: inventing plans of self-deliverance; making up schemes of daily life and programmes of service and progress. He no sooner makes one plan than it is displaced by another. His schemes follow in quick succession, but the second always amends the first, and both give way to the third, and he finds that in much scheming is much disappointment; it brings sorrow into his heart daily. By day he is mocked by harassing thoughts; by night he reverses all his plans in dreams; and in the morning he awakes to forget both day and night in some new vision of possible self-deliverance. Thus the mind, left to itself, is self-tormented; being limited in range, it is continually checking its own conclusions, and hesitating as to its own purposes. How true it is, "Without Me ye can do nothing." This is what Jesus Christ said to His disciples, and we feel it to be true in our own souls when we endeavour to invent plans for ourselves, and to make our will into a kind of divinity. It is curious to observe, too, how the Psalmist continually mixes up the right view and the wrong one, and how he is certain to fall into the wrong view the moment he turns away his complete attention from the living God. In this verse he occupies the wrong standpoint when he is wondering how long his enemy is to be exalted over him. When a man is truly living in God he has no time to think about his enemy, nor any disposition to consider what that enemy will do. God occupies the whole soul with equal vividness at every point, and dominates in gracious sovereignty over every beating pulse and living thought. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) **Having sorrow in my heart daily.**—*Sorrows*:—Can this be a common experience? Many of us would say so. Sorrow is an excellent discipline, and a healing medicine. Let us notice a few of our sorrows. I. **THERE IS THAT OF OUR LONELY PATH.** Many people find a friend, husband, wife, business, pleasure on which they can lean, but there comes a time when you feel helpless. Sometimes you say, "There is nobody who has to walk in a path like mine." This is true, but then we all feel the same. Let our loneliness teach us to seek the presence of God. You will always be disappointed until you feel the touch of God. II. **THAT WHICH IS TOO PAINFUL TO RECEIVE SYMPATHY IN WORDS.** See the history of Job, when his three friends came to mourn with him. "None spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great." None but God can comfort you. III. **THAT WHICH ARISES FROM DOUBT.** Satan said to our Lord, "If Thou be the Son of God." So we all feel at times, and we say, "Is there really a God?" "Can He care for me?" "No," seems the answer to everything at times. You may have a medicine chest in your house, which may help you in slight disorders; but there may come a time when it fails, and you look for other help. And so, at times, the Bible, the Church, and the minister are like that medicine chest, and you turn from each, saying, "I cannot obtain any relief there." At such time go into your room, shut your door, and speak to God Himself. It is a sin to doubt if you make it despair. Last night, when I went up to bed, my little child called out, "Papa, I am so afraid!" I comforted her, and said, "Don't be afraid, dear!" She whispered, "Papa, leave your door wide open, and then I can go to sleep." I went to my room, and let the door bang against the chair, to let the little one hear that it was wide open. The thought that my door was wide open, and that my care reached her from my room to hers rested her little, anxious heart, and she slept the sleep of the innocent. In your doubts and fears keep fast hold on this fact—that Jesus Christ is God's door, wide open for you. IV. **THAT FROM TEMPORAL LOSSES.** A ruined merchant came home one afternoon earlier than usual, and, sitting in his chair, buried his face in his hands. When his wife touched him on the shoulder he exclaimed, in a groan like as from a man who is being buried alive, "Mary, I have lost all! I am ruined!" She said, "But, James, you have not lost me!" Then a sweet child came up, saying, "Father, you haven't lost me either!" One of his daughters said, "Father, have you lost God?" Another asked, "Father, have you lost heaven?" Stupid man, he said he was ruined! Fancy a man saying he has lost "all" when he has at least one or two kind friends, and also a loving God and a blessed heaven! V. **THAT FROM SIN.** There is great sorrow in the heart of a sinner, and it is well to be so. It would be a calamity else. The wages of sin is the death of happiness, but the life of misery. VI. **THAT FROM BEREAVEMENT.** Some of you keep relics of your departed ones. The boy's rusty knife, with only one blade, and that broken; but how the eyes of the mother glisten when she looks on that old knife. Here is a toy soldier, without a head; but see the tear of that strong man drop thereon. Ah, your children who have gone from you! Are they not the Lord's

magnets to draw you up to heaven? (*William Birch.*) *Advice to the dejected* :—To “commune with” our own hearts and to “take counsel,” as is meant here, are not the same things. We may pore over our guilt and wretchedness, and overlook our highest mercies. Such, for a time, was the case with David, and there are many who still do the same. 1. THE DISCONSOLATE SITUATION, WITH THE REMEDY TO WHICH HE REPAIRED UNDER IT. 1. He was sorely persecuted. 2. The Lord seemed to prosper his persecutors and not him. 3. His most intimate acquaintance seemed to have forsaken him. 4. And there were spiritual distresses beside. The Lord “hid His face.” 5. And for a long time. “How long,” &c. Now concerning all this load of trouble, he is said to have taken “counsel in his soul.” He was in much perplexity and distress. It did not last long, however, for, he says, “I have trusted in Thy mercy.” What cannot Divine mercy effect? II. THOSE WHO ARE LIKE DAVID, AND NEED THE SAME HELP. Such are—1. Those who sink into despondency under the adverse providences of God. 2. Those who at the outset of their religious concern are encompassed with darkness and long-continued dejection. Various are the causes of this. Circumstances without them. False ideas as to election. Something within them, as a propensity to take unfavourable views of themselves; or a species of self-righteousness. 3. Those who during the most part of their Christian profession live under habitual fear lest they should prove reprobate at last. Now if we would wish to discover whether there were any particles of steel in a heap of rubbish, the best way would not be to search for them, but to hold a large and powerful magnet over it. And this, if it be there, is the way to discover true religion in our souls. Hold the truths of the Gospel over them and this will draw it forth. (*Andrew Fuller.*) *Sources and remedies of disquietude* :—Presumption and despair are the two fatal rocks on which we are in danger of making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. A vain conceit of our own righteousness and strength exposes to the one; sad and gloomy reflections on our own sin and corruptions, as if they exceeded the mercies of God and excluded us from the hope of forgiveness, plunge us into the other. There is a godly jealousy of ourselves which is highly proper and necessary, as it leads to watchfulness and circumspection and a constant dependence upon Divine strength. But this jealousy may, like zeal, be without knowledge, and may exceed its just and proper limits. Point out some of those things on account of which good men take counsel in their souls and have sorrow in their heart daily. 1. Many humble and sincere Christians are apt to complain of irregular and wandering thoughts, in prayer and other religious duties. Whence they conclude that their minds are not duly impressed with a sense of Divine things. Doubts and fears of this nature constitute the grand distinction between man, as a being capable of religion, and the inferior creatures. In everything we attempt we are interrupted with various impressions and distractions of mind. There are many who cannot attend upon any religious duty with that steadiness and alacrity which they discover in their secular employments. Others, more deserving of our sympathy, both desire and endeavour to have their minds composed when engaged in devotional duties; but, to their sorrow of heart, they fall short of their wishes and fail in their attempts. The best of men are not wholly exempted from these wanderings of heart. It may be asked, how are we to distinguish the suggestions and temptations of Satan from those that arise from the remains of sin and corruption in the renewed heart? We may distinguish them by the welcome reception we give them on the one hand, and by the pain and uneasiness they give us on the other. Do you abhor the evil thoughts and suggestions you complain of? In that case you have no reason to be cast down or discouraged. His grace will be sufficient for you. It is the consent of the will that constitutes the criminality of any action whatever; and, while it is our daily struggle to withhold this, and we are, by Divine grace, enabled to withhold it, we have no reason to be cast down or disquieted. 2. Another source of inward disquietude arises from the defects and imperfections that attend our best services. There is not a just man that liveth and sinneth not, is the language of Scripture and of universal experience. But this consideration, though it ought to humble, need not discourage us in our Christian warfare. Though we cannot hope wholly to eradicate our sins and corruptions, it is our duty to resist and oppose them by our constant endeavours and fervent prayers. Those who imagine that they have arrived at sinless perfection must be unacquainted with the spirituality of the Divine law, and with the extent of its obligations. This is our encouragement, that if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father. With regard to those who have fallen into grievous sins after the most solemn engagements, their case requires to be treated



with the utmost caution. A good man may be "overtaken in a fault." Such are fit objects of Christian compassion, and stand in need of all that comfort which the nature of the Gospel covenant, rightly understood, abundantly administers. 3. Another source of disquietude arises from the outward troubles and afflictions of life. When these overtake the Christian he naturally looks up to God for relief. But guilt is suspicious, and there is sin enough in the best of men to justify the severest trials with which they may be visited in this world. When affliction brings the sins of men of distinguished piety to their remembrance the recollection of them is accompanied with many aggravating circumstances. In all the trying circumstances of this changeful life the Christian has an anchor of hope sure and steadfast. 4. Another source of disquietude is seen in the case of David—"The Lord hid His face from him." He walked in darkness. This is not peculiar to the case of David. The exercised Christian knows what is meant by it, and has felt it in his painful experience. Job experienced the same. David says, "I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation." This remedy will be found effectual in every similar case. We shall not pretend to state all the reasons why God permits some of His dearest children to lose their spiritual comfort. One reason may be, that they are apt to build too much on their frames and feelings. Practical reflections—(1) If the thoughts of our hearts and the actions of our lives have so great an influence on our present peace and future happiness, we ought constantly to observe and duly to regulate them. (2) Religion is intended to regulate our practice, as well as to soothe and elevate our minds. As in the natural, so in the spiritual life, activity and enjoyment are essentially connected with one another; and the more we attend to the weightier matters of the law, the more will our comforts abound. (*James Ross, D.D.*)

**Ver. 3. Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.**—*Moral and spiritual death*.—The Psalmist's cry was for a physical deliverance from mortal danger—probably from a violent death at the hands of his enemies. With little or no straining of the words they may be turned into a prayer against the peril of moral and spiritual death. Under the emblem of death, virtuous and pious souls in all ages have been wont to depict a torpor, coldness, and inactivity of the moral and spiritual faculties. We dare not affirm that spiritual death is, like physical death, a final condition. 1. Moral death. The main point in bringing up children is to give moral life, so that at maturity conscience may be in them a living power. You must not only give your child rules of conduct, you must teach him likewise to hate evil and to love goodness. For moral death in the young man or woman there is but one remedy—the opening, lightening of the eyes. Another form of moral death is discoverable in those of maturer years, whose whole morality consists in simple imitation of others by habit, and in ruling the life by the ordinary customs and opinions of one's own little circle. Hundreds and thousands of quite respectable people are destitute of moral life. The essential conditions of moral life are absent. Such temptations as may come to them are resisted from motives of self-indulgence rather than of self-denial and self-conquest. The worship of ease and respectability has gradually brought them into a state of moral torpor, indifference, and inactivity—has brought upon them, in fact, the sleep of death. Close akin to this is another form of moral death, into which some sink who once knew the nobility and the blessedness of the moral life. They began their worldly career not only innocent, but good, longing and striving to be good; but through adverse circumstances, through the pressure of the struggle for existence, they have been led to follow the evil example of the multitude, to copy their small dishonesties and their petty deceits in the matter of business, and to cease to have scruples in doing things and conniving at things which in their early days they shrank from as wicked. They become morally weaker from day to day, and at last the sleep of death comes over their hearts and consciences, and moral activity or heroic virtue is for them no longer possible. It is forgetfulness of God that most of all brings on this dreadful torpor. For the great mass of people, as they are, I can affirm, without fear of contradiction, that a religious life, a life of earnest prayer to God, is absolutely indispensable to a life of true and lofty morality. 2. Spiritual death. Moral death is widespread, even among respectable citizens. Spiritual death is equally prevalent among professedly religious people. Torpor, indifference, and inactivity of soul towards God is, I fear, the rule rather than the exception. And this is due to ignorance rather than to baseness, to a darkness which only the light of God can dispel. Spiritual death may be brought on by such means as these: by falseness

in the creed detected, but not rejected; by superstition; by an unfounded fear of God; by undue regard for the mere externals of religious observances; by ignorance of what is really essential to true religion. These may be called the intellectual agents of spiritual disease and death. But there are other agents which are practical, such as being over-engrossed in worldly pursuits, giving up regular habits of prayer, seeking too eagerly the pleasures and indulgences of the flesh. We need a knowledge of the truth, which only God can give us, and which is much more than intellectual accuracy and consistency in our creed. The sleep of death may creep over us when exhausted by the eternal problems which we make for ourselves, or find already made in our search after God. (*Charles Voysey, M.A.*) *Death in the midst of life*.—David was under no ordinary distress of mind, arising from some adversity into which he had fallen through the instrumentality of a fellow-mortal. David knew that adversity is uniformly attended with one of two results: either a serious consideration of the causes which have brought down these inflictions and a consequent turning to God, or a reckless inattention to and a hardened disregard of the dealings of God's providence, which eventually lead to an utter disregard of Him here, and an eternal separation from His favour and presence hereafter. In the text we have three petitions—1. That the Lord would condescend to make him the object of His most gracious consideration. He grounds his plea upon a sense of utter helplessness in the sight of God. How blessed are days of adversity, when they bring with them such distrust in ourselves, and such unshaken confidence in the protection of God! 2. That the eyes of his spiritual understanding might be lightened. 3. That he might not be permitted to sleep the sleep of death. By death the Psalmist does not exclusively mean the separation of soul and body. We are inclined to think he is praying for deliverance from that spiritual death in which all, though naturally alive, are involved, on whose heart the spirit of the living God has not wrought a saving work. (*James Robertson, A.M.*) *Letting in the light*.—A passer-by one day asked of an Irishman, whom he observed breaking a large hole in the wall of an old cellar, what he was doing. The answer of Barney was prompt, "Shure, an' I'm lettin' out the dark." We spend much time and energy in the same foolish idea; we attack the dark, instead of putting all our powers into the glorious work of letting in the light. Whether the darkness be that of uncivilised ignorance, or infidel prejudice, let us shine in the light of the glorious Gospel, and the darkness will fly. (*W. Luff.*)

Ver. 5. **BUT I HAVE TRUSTED IN THY MERCY.**—*On the mercy of God*.—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE MERCY OF GOD? Mercy differs from goodness in that it supposes guilt. Without the fall of man there could have been no occasion for his redemption; and without the plan of redemption it does not appear that we could have formed any opinion of the Divine mercy. II. HOW DOES IT REMEDY MAN'S MISERY? The two evils to which man is exposed are sin and death. Yet they differ only as cause and effect. Sin is the distemper, and death the issue of it. Against sin God hath provided by giving us the light of Scripture; against death by the new principle of life infused into the Christian from the time of his baptismal regeneration. III. WHAT IS IT TO TRUST IN THIS MERCY? We cannot do so till we know what we have to fear. But men are insensible of this, because self-satisfied and resting in a mistaken confidence. To trust in God is to renounce all self-confidence, and to rely on the mercy of God. Do not mistake presumption for trust. They who do, think that God's mercy is only to deliver from punishment. It is to deliver from sin. IV. THE JOY AND COMFORT FOLLOWING. "My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation." (*A. Jones, M.A.*) *Mercy and joy*.—The minister of the Gospel is to proclaim free grace everywhere. But the heart must be awakened ere it can receive the truth of God's grace. I. THE EXPERIMENTAL STATEMENT OF DAVID. "I have trusted in Thy mercy." He was a sinner, but here was all his hope. This the test of true discipleship, whether we have come to trust as David did, and to hope in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. And he knew this experimentally. Dry doctrines will not suffice alone. They would starve a soul. There must be experience. David here tells out his sorrow. He mourns God's delays. But he trusts in God. II. HIS EXPERIENCE. "My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation." He had trusted, and he anticipates rejoicing. Here was the shelter, the anchor of his soul. The Church and the Christian can never be shipwrecked, for the anchor holds. He speaks of a heart joy. No one can know anything about heart-rejoicing but those who have been heart-achers. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." How blessed it is to experience the

stillness and the quietness of the peace of God. Compared with this, what is the world worth? (*J. J. West, M.A.*) *My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.—A renovation of heart essential to a state of salvation:—*1. Without the renovation of the heart there can be no distinct knowledge of the Gospel. The natural mind cannot receive the things of God; they are spiritually discerned. The mind must be renewed, that the man may become spiritual. 2. Nor can there be a new nature. This is essential to the enjoyment of salvation. For how can we enjoy that which is opposed to our feelings, desires, habits? We have no enjoyment in the society of those who are the objects of our aversion. The "enmity" of the mind must be "slain" by the constraining power of the love of Christ; but this involves renovation. 3. Unless the heart is renewed by the Spirit of God there is no possibility of accounting for the discovery and preparation of a plan of redemption at all. Was it worthy of the Divinity to do all that He has done in redemption for the sake of saving those He never intended to change and purify? 4. This renovation of heart is essential to the enjoyment of heaven. Take an individual from the lowest ranks of society, and place him in the midst of the high-born, the educated, the refined; where will be his enjoyment? The unrenewed man, set in the midst of those who have their "conversation in heaven," has no relish for the company, and gladly turns from it. The reason for finding no interest in heaven is—unrenewedness of heart. (*J. Burnet.*)

Ver. 6. *I will sing unto the Lord.—The passing of morbid states of mind:—*Much spiritual darkness is no doubt caused by the mind's sympathising with a morbid condition of the body, a condition not always known to the sufferer, and often not even suspected. Nevertheless, the morbid condition exists, and prevents the mind from rightly estimating the evidences of its conversion. No sooner, however, is the believer's health restored than he finds himself in a new world of religious hope and feeling, and yet without a single new evidence of his being a child of God. His repentance is not more sincere, his faith more entire, nor his purpose to serve God more determined. His restoration to health alone has invested his evidences of conversion to God with pleasurable emotions. He has, of course, more enjoyment in his religion, but not an iota more of genuineness and safety in it than there was before. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *Joy in God's ways with us:—*This Psalm, like many others, begins in sorrow, but ends in joy. In all God's works there is a great likeness running throughout—a change from bad to good, from hope deferred to real enjoyment; as the proverb has it, "No cross, no crown." Thus it is that daylight succeeds the darkness of night, and disperses it. Health and strength follow so often after a bed of sickness, inward joy after a long period of outward sorrow. Our Lord Himself "went not after joy; but first He suffered pain." And such is the life's history of all God's most chosen saints. How differently a man goes through the world who dwells upon the blessings he has received more than the sorrows and trials he may have undergone, who tries to see in all circumstances of his life God's goodness towards himself, instead of repining continually in discontent at everything which crosses his will or his hopes. It is in this way that God so often draws the hearts of men to Himself, weans them from the love of this world, makes them to love Him supremely before all else, and thus sows the seed of eternal life in their hearts. We are all surrounded by a thousand blessings, of which we take little or no account. These words of the text contain a direct expression of our own individual blessings and mercies. It is the work of God's Holy Spirit in us to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God. And when we love God we love all that belongs to God. Let this be one object of our daily life, to see more and more God's love towards us. (*W. J. Stracey, M.A.*)

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#### PSALM XIV.

VERS. 1-7. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.—The practical denial of God the root of all evil:—*The heavy fact of widespread corruption presses on the Psalmist, and starts a train of thought which begins with a sad picture of the deluge of evil, rises to a vision of God's judgment of and on it, triumphs in the prospect of the sudden panic which shall shake the souls of all the "workers of



iniquity," when they see that God is with the righteous, and ends with a sigh for the coming of that time. The staple of the poem is but the familiar contrast of a corrupt world and a righteous judge who judges, but it is cast in very dramatic and vivid form here. We listen first to the Psalmist's judgment of his generation. Eras of great culture and material prosperity may have a very seamy side, which eyes accustomed to the light of God cannot fail to see. The root of the evil lay, as the Psalmist believed, in a practical denial of God, and whoever thus denied Him was a "fool." Practical denial or neglect of His working in the world, rather than a creed of negation, is in the Psalmist's mind. The biblical conception of folly is moral perversity rather than intellectual feebleness, and whoever is morally and religiously wrong cannot be in reality intellectually right. The practical denial of God lies at the root of two forms of evil. Positively, "they have made their doings corrupt and abominable"—rotten in themselves and sickening and loathsome to pure hearts and to God. Negatively, they do no good things. The next wave of thought (ver. 2) brings into his consciousness the solemn contrast between the godless noise and activity of earth and the silent gaze of God that marks it all. The purpose of the Divine Guest is set forth with deep insight as being the finding of even one good, devout man. Other Scriptures present the gaze of God as for other reasons, this one in the midst of its solemnity is gracious with revelation of Divine desires. What is to be the issue of the strongly contrasted situation in these two verses: beneath, a world full of godless lawlessness; above, a fixed eye piercing to the discernment of the inmost nature of actions and characters? Ver. 3 answers. The Psalmist's sad estimate is repeated as the result of the Divine search. But it is also increased in emphasis and in compass. This stern indictment is quoted by St. Paul in "Romans," as confirmation of his thesis of universal sinfulness. But this baffled quest cannot be the end. If Jehovah seeks in vain for goodness on earth, earth cannot go on for ever in godless riot. Therefore, with eloquent abruptness the voice from heaven crashes in upon the "fools" in the full career of their folly. The thunder rolls from a clear sky. . . . Finally, the whole course of thought gathers itself up in the prayer that the salvation of Israel—the true Israel, apparently—were come out of Zion, God's dwelling, from which He comes forth in His delivering power. The voice of the oppressed handful of good men in an evil generation is heard in this closing prayer. It is encouraged by the visions which have passed before the Psalmist. The assurance that God will intervene is the very life-breath of the cry to Him that He would. Because we know that He will deliver, therefore we find it in our hearts to pray that He would deliver. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*The practical atheist*.—Thus the Bible ever speaks of those who have cast off the fear of God. They are those whose understanding is darkened, who, professing themselves to be wise, become fools. Such men, who make a boast of their reason, and would fain walk by the light of their reason, prove how little their reason is worth. The epithet is the more cutting because persons of this kind generally lay claim to more than ordinary discernment. There is here rather a practical than a theoretical atheism; not so much a denial of the being of a God as a denial of His moral government of the world (cf. x. 5); and this evinced in their actions rather than in their words. Their lives show what the thought of their hearts is. The "fool" is not the philosophic atheist with his arguments ("subducta ratione vel formati syllogismi"—Calvin); but the man who by the practice of wickedness so stifles and corrupts within him the knowledge of God that he virtually acknowledges no God. South, in his sermon on this verse, lays a stress on these words, as implying that the atheist dare not avow his atheism, but only cherishes it within. But the occurrence of the phrase elsewhere—e.g. x. 6, 10, 13—does not justify this stress. (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*)

*The character, reasonings, and folly of the fool*.—I. THE CHARACTER. The "fool" in Scripture is the man who makes a wrong choice of good; who, when two objects are placed before him, one a lesser good and one a greater good, chooses the lesser in preference to the greater. Preferring the future life to the present is wisdom, preferring the present life to the future is folly. Why must the poor fool say in his heart—"No God. I wish there were no God"? The reason is, that when a man makes the wrong choice, his heart is miserable within him. The world cannot make him happy. The soul is immortal, and nothing short of immortality can content it. The soul is spiritual, and nothing but a spiritual God can bless it. The soul is sinful, and nothing but a Saviour can give it peace. The fool knows all this, yet will not come to God that he may have peace. So he says in his heart, "Oh, that there were no God to judge me!"

II. THE REASONINGS. The reasonings of the spiritual fool!

Alas! there can be none. There is no infidelity in the world but that which proceeds from ignorance or from sin. If you are the character described you have no reasonings by which to justify yourself; and I cannot therefore waste your time by attempting to refute what does not exist. III. FOLLY. The wish which you form in your heart—the wish that all religion were false, the wish that there were no God to judge you at the last—is utterly and totally impossible. Is it not wisdom to put away your foolish hope, that God will not call you to judgment, and to turn to God, and to thank Him that He has promised forgiveness of sins to all those who, with a true penitent heart and lively faith, turn to Him? (*George Townsend, M.A.*)

*The folly and wretchedness of an atheistical inclination:*—All nature so clearly points out, and so loudly proclaims, a Creator of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, that whoever hears not its voice and sees not its proofs may well be thought wilfully deaf and obstinately blind. Every faculty, every object of every faculty, demonstrates a Deity. Can a man possibly conceive that such wonderful order and perfect beauty should be ever formed by the fortuitous operations of unconscious, unactive particles of matter? The expression in the text may denote, not the man's real opinion or persuasion, but his inclination and desire. He secretly wishes that there were no God, and endeavours to draw his belief that way as much as he can! To wish against the being of a God is to wish mankind the greatest mischief and distress that can possibly be conceived. Were there no awe of a supreme Being, no terrors of a future judgment to restrain us, what government on earth would be able to maintain itself, or find protection for its subjects? What wise man would choose, or dare to live in a community of atheists, if such a one could be found? Consider how the minds and conditions of private persons would be affected by the supposition of a forlorn and fatherless world. Under the tuition and government of infinite wisdom and goodness everything appears with a comfortable aspect. Men never need to want the purest comforts and most perfect satisfactions while God is their portion. On this account, whether the world frown or smile, the wise man is neither highly transported nor deeply dejected. Whatever be his lot, the peace of his mind is secured, and his heart is at rest. For his hopes are founded on a rock, and his treasure fixed where nothing can touch it. Without a God, a providence, and a future state there could be no such thing as prosperity, no satisfaction, no real enjoyment for rational beings; nor even any true peace or tranquillity of mind. What dismal effects atheism would produce in adversity. How inexcusably foolish and criminal are those men who believe and acknowledge a God, and yet live as if there were none! (*J. Balguy.*)

*The withered heart:*—The word “fool” has been traced to a term which signifies the act of “withering.” The sense would be represented by the expression—the withered heart hath said there is no God. Though in the Scriptures the term “heart” is often employed as signifying the mind or judgment, yet in this case, judging by the consequences that are detailed, the reference is evidently to the moral nature. A distinction is indeed made in the Old Testament between “mind” and “heart,” as in the instance of the first and greatest commandment. The point to be observed then is, that the “heart” or moral nature has in this instance “withered”; affection is blighted, moral instinct is perverted, the natural and noblest aspirations of life are utterly extinct. A difference is to be marked between a purely intellectual scepticism and a corrupt moral aversion. There are speculative agnostics whose outward life may be unquestionable as to honour and faithfulness; but there are also deniers of the existence of God whose object is to get rid of responsibility and judgment. It is not transgressing the lines of fact and observation to say that it is the “heart” which first and most truly believes in God. Where the “heart” or moral purpose is simple and constant, intellectual aberrations will certainly be rectified or rendered spiritually harmless. Everything of a religious nature depends upon the purpose and faithfulness of the moral nature. The heart feels after God. The heart is first conscious of the Divine absence. The heart soon becomes a medium of accusation through which the whole nature is assailed with just and destructive reproach. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

*A fool indeed:*—What does he say? “There is no God.” Why, everything he sees, hears, touches, contradicts him. The very worm he treads on, yea, every blade of grass, affirms “There is a God.” We are all ready to admit that he who denies this is a fool. But stop; observe in what way he says it. Not with his lips, but in his heart. How many things are said there but never spoken out, God and ourselves only know. And it is not the mind or the understanding which says it, but the heart, the affections. His understanding may not deny but his heart does. In his affections, his desires, his thoughts, his life, his

conduct are all as if there were no God. If the life be taken as proof, how many of these fools there are. For they never pray, they never regard God as the orderer of their lives. They speak of chance, accident, but put God out of the question. And they never think of asking His direction in any of their actions; His book they throw on one side, and scarce ever look at it. They deem themselves quite able to direct their own steps. And they say the same who secretly sin, and think none seeth them, or that their sin will never find them out. If they escape human punishment they fear no other. In fact, what are all men saying who live after the flesh, or who neglect the gospel of Christ—but that “there is no God”? “The fool” told of here, then, is not so uncommon a person as might be thought. And is he not a fool? Let us each ask ourselves the solemn question the text suggests, “Are we or are we not amongst those foolish men who say in their hearts ‘There is no God’?” If we are, may He turn us from darkness to light. (*A. Roberts, M.A.*)

*The folly of the fool.*—The first great principle of the Christian religion, and the first announced fact of Divine revelation, is the being of God. We have, in the text, the solution of all practical atheism in the world. Infidelity is the root form of sin.

**I. THE BOLD ASSERTION.** “No God.” Such a denial involves tremendous difficulties. There are physical mysteries to be accounted for. There are intellectual phenomena to be explained. There are moral intuitions, soul out-reachings, spiritual instincts and aspirations to be satisfactorily interpreted. The universe evidencing marks of intelligent design, traces of omnipotent power, infinite skill, beauty, and beneficence must be the effect of an adequate cause—the work of a self-existent, independent, infinitely wise God. What shall we say of man—physically, mentally, morally? Can such marvellous beings have been raised out of nothingness by the revolving wheel of time, until its revolution shall crush them into nothingness again? This bold assertion is also in direct antagonism with the teachings of revelation. “In the beginning God created.” Blot out God from your creed, and the Bible becomes at once a useless volume. It cannot be interpreted. The evidence of the genuineness of Divine revelation is overwhelming. It rests on four grand arguments, namely, the miracles it records, the prophecies it contains, the goodness of the doctrine, and the moral character of the penman.

**II. THE REGION IN WHICH THIS ASSERTION IS MADE.** “In his heart.” Man’s great defect is a corrupt heart. It is the fruitful source of all evil, the centre of all impiety, and the seat of foolishness and infidelity. The atheism of the times, and of all times, has been and still is the sad effect of heart derangement rather than brain disorder. The intellect has often been blamed when it should have been the heart. It better suits the promptings and desires of the carnal nature to negative the existence of a Divine Ruler than to admit it. Let man be set right at heart, and the philosophy of fools would vanish into thin air. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*)

*The fool’s denial of God’s existence.*—The folly of atheism is undeniable when we remember—I. THAT THE THING SO ARDENTLY WISHED FOR IS ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE. The all-seeing God can no more shut His eyes to the conduct of mortals than He can cease to exist. As His superintending care is necessary for the preservation of the universe, so is the constant exercise of His moral government required for the vindication of His own honour. It is told that a Frenchman once visited a castle in Germany where dwelt a nobleman who had a good and devoted son, his comfort and his pride. In the course of conversation the Frenchman spoke in such unbecoming terms of God that the baron said, “Are you not afraid of offending God by speaking in this way?” The foreigner announced, with cool indifference, that he knew nothing about God, for he had never seen Him. The next morning the baron pointed out to his visitor a beautiful picture on the wall, and said, “My son painted that.” “He must be a very clever youth,” courteously replied the Frenchman. Later on the baron took his visitor over his gardens, which were of rare beauty and contained many choicest plants. On being asked who managed the garden, he replied, “My son, and he knows almost every plant, from the cedar to the hyssop.” “What a happy man you must be,” said the Frenchman, “to have such a son!” “How do you know I have a son?” asked the baron, with a grave face. “Why, because I have seen his works; and I am sure he must be both clever and good, or he never could have done all you have shown me.” “But you have never seen him!” returned the baron. “No, but I already know him very well, because I can form a just estimate of him from his works.” “Well, then, if you are able to judge of my son’s good character by seeing his various works, how does it happen that you can form no estimate of God’s goodness by witnessing such proofs of His handiwork?” If the fool could have his way, and banish the Almighty One from His own dominions, it would—



II. BE AN UNSPEAKABLE DAMAGE TO ALL EVEN IN THIS WORLD. If men would put an end to the beneficent rule of our heavenly Father, what would they offer as compensation for so irreparable a loss! Should any have reached this extreme point in foolishness that they have wished there were no God, let them ponder these thoughts. 1. Before you are again drawn so far within the dreary region of unbelief, ask this question: Have I a sincere desire to know the truth? I put the matter in this shape, because thousands have really hated the truth, when they fancied that they loved it. 2. In order to strengthen your feeble faith, make diligent use of the light which you already possess. 3. Be willing to ask God, in humble prayer, to give you light, and to guide you into all truth. One of the fiercest of the French revolutionists said to a simple peasant, "I will have all your church steeples pulled down, that you may no longer have any object to remind you of your old superstitions." "But," returned the peasant, with an air of triumph, "you cannot help leaving us the stars." Instead of the blank, cheerless lot of such as would fain believe that "there is no God," the wise in heart will rather be disposed to adopt the language of the great philosopher, Sir Humphrey Davy, as their own, "I envy no qualities of the mind in others—nor genius, nor power, wit, nor fancy; but if I could choose what would be most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing." (*John N. Norton.*) *The folly and impiety of infidelity.*—Consider the text—I. AS AN IMPIOUS WISH. This is what he would desire: it would gratify and gladden his heart if it were so. II. AS A BOLD DECLARATION. This goes much further. He has come to this pitch of daring, to affirm "There is no God." Not believing in God, he does not believe he has a soul and a hereafter. No wonder that he becomes abominable. True, all do not go to such lengths. Some would only say, "There is no such a God as people who believe the Bible say there is." There is some God, but He either takes no notice, or He is far too good to punish men for their little deviations from virtue here. This is deism. And there is yet another kind of infidelity. Men who will not go so far as either the deist, and certainly not as the atheist, yet they deny that God interferes with the affairs of men, or that He has given us in the Bible a guide for our conduct and a measure for our expectations. At the judgment, for they believe there will be a judgment, they say that men's good actions will be found to outnumber their bad ones, and so they hope to escape. Nor does infidelity stop even here. It stalks abroad under the guise of liberality of sentiment, or the dominion of rationalism. Truth to them is but the handmaid of reason, and no one is bound to believe what he cannot understand. They say a man is no more accountable for his faith than he is for the colour of his skin and the shape of his body. Let a man do the best he can, let him live up to the light of nature, and let him never fear any hereafter. These are the most dangerous people of all, for whilst many would shun an atheist or deist or Socinian, the theologian can spread his sentiments, like a deadly poison, unchecked. This is why the Gospel is so scorned and neglected. Men are taught that they can do without the Gospel, they do not want a Saviour. III. BUT THE WORD OF GOD CALLS ALL THESE MEN "FOOLS." Think of their unutterable folly. For see the evidence of creation—heavens, earth, man in body and mind. Does not reason bid them believe? And if there be no God to whom we must answer, whence the curse that is upon the world? How came the certain fact of the universal deluge? What is the meaning of conscience? Why must all die? He strikes, too, at the very root of the honour of God. The controversy is not as to whether there be any God, but who shall He be? "Who is Lord over me?" is the principle of infidelity. The man wishes to be his own lord. It is the very spirit of devilism. Reflect, then, what a horrible creature man is. How needful it is that man should learn humility. How just will be the judgment of God upon all atheistical and unbelieving sinners. How cheering and consoling to the true Christian are the very truths which infidels ridicule and scorners deny. (*R. Shitler.*) *The heart-speech of a fool.*—The Christian faith, like the Christian man, has to pass through many a conflict. In every age of its existence it has had to fight, not only for its final developments, but also for its first principles. The Bible is not passive in this conflict. It strikes as well as bears—assails as well as defends. And when scepticism has run its usual course to atheism, and the man who began with doubting Revelation goes on to deny the Revealer, it comes forth with the lofty sarcasm—"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Observe the scope of the utterance. I. AS TO ITS MATTER. The Bible all through tells us of God. "In the beginning God." And it tells of Him as a Personal Being of the highest attributes. But the "fool" denies it. II. THE MANNER OF

THE UTTERANCE. It is private rather than public : he saith "in his heart," that is, when alone. It may be the breathing of a wish rather than a conviction. III. THE CAUSES OF THE UTTERANCE. We shall find them in our hearts. 1. We do not like the mystery of God. It is so humbling to us to believe in a being whom we are utterly unable to understand. 2. We do not like the authority of God. Now we come nearer home. We could bear with the mystery if it had nothing to do with us. But the claims of God upon us are infinite and endless. His hand is ever upon us. It is as much as I can do to submit to the ordinary laws of social life ; but a law that pursues me everywhere and always, and sends its mandates into the secrecy of my mind and heart—that is more than I can bear. I wish there were no such law. 3. We do not like the prospect of meeting Him. To most men it is most unwelcome. IV. THE CHARACTER OF SUCH AN UTTERANCE. It is the fool that says it. See how gross his folly. (*F. Tucker, B.A.*) *Atheism* :—The Bible never attempts to prove the existence of God. Atheism, which is the denial of Him, is either practical or spiritual. The former has always and everywhere been. But speculative atheists are fewer in number. "I had rather," says Lord Bacon, "believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame was without a mind." The burden of proof rests with the atheist. I. HIS FOLLY MAY BE SEEN BY GLANCING AT THE UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT FROM EXISTING OBJECTS. See all the phenomena of nature. And there is the moral evidence. II. BY ITS UNWARRANTABLE ASSUMPTIONS. How can a man know that there is no God ? III. BY ITS INJURIOUS CHARACTER. "No atheist, as such, can be a true friend, an affectionate friend, or a loyal subject." See what came of it in the French Revolution. IV. BY ITS INADEQUACY TO ENCOUNTER THE HOURS OF TRIAL AND OF DEATH. In an Alpine village is the peaceful grave of one who died upon the Riffel-horn : over his grave is the significant inscription, "It is I, be not afraid." The good man, and only he, is not afraid. (*J. H. Hitchens, D.D.*) *The being of a God* :—I. GENERAL EVIDENCES FOR THE BEING OF A GOD, INDEPENDENT OF SCRIPTURE. 1. That it has been acknowledged by all nations in all ages. Polytheism does not deny but confirm the truth. Only individuals, never nations, have denied it. And the lives and the end of these men show that their opinion has often been shaken. Hobbes, one of the chief of them, said that he could not bear to be left for a moment in the dark ; and just before he died he told the spectators that he was about to take a leap in the dark ! So it was indeed. A few such individuals, rejecting an important doctrine, can form no argument against the doctrine itself. And even of these, some have, at particular seasons, confessed their folly. Thus Volney, in a storm at sea, called upon the very God whose existence he had denied. Thus Voltaire, when dying, confessed the Christian religion to be true, and had the audacity to partake of the Christian sacrament as a sort of passport to heaven. 2. All creatures manifest and declare it. Look at their production, their preservation, their adaptation. Look at the nature of man also, body and soul. 3. The extraordinary occurrences that have taken place. II. THE SCRIPTURE NAME OF THOSE WHO DENY THIS TRUTH. III. PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENTS OF THE DOCTRINE. But we must know God in the heart. (*T. Mortimer.*) *The folly of atheism* :—That any should say this, is not easy to imagine were we not forced to believe it possible. History tells us of such, and we have no cause to have so much better opinion of the modern age as to doubt that it has those who are ready enough to vent the same impiety. I. THE ASSERTION MADE. "There is no God." By which—1. We may understand absolute denial of His existence or a denial of God's providence. Epicurus was of this opinion. He confessed there was a God, but as for His interposing and concerning Himself in our affairs, this he utterly denied ; and the reason he gave was that such superintendence would interfere with the Divine ease and felicity. We take the text in both these senses. 2. The manner of the assertion, "said in his heart." It wears the badge of guilt, privacy, and darkness ; and as if it were sensible of the treason it carries in its own bonds. The atheist will not speak out, but in his heart he can and does say what he likes. 3. What is implied in this saying. An inward wish that there were no God. His seeking out arguments to persuade himself it is true. A readiness to acquiesce in such arguments. It is a sign that a man is falling when he catches at straws. For why should there not be spiritual substances ? And if there be disorder and seeming chance now, do we not look for a day of retribution ? The man's placing his trust and dependence for his good on other things than God. This is a loud denial of God. It may not be a verbal denial, but it is no less real. II. THE AUTHOR OF THIS ASSERTION. "The fool." For—1. He contradicts the general

judgment of mankind. The notion of God is one that a man is not catechised but born into ; his mother's womb was the school he learned it in. Now it is morally impossible for any falsity to be universally received and blessed, both as to all times and places. 2. He lays aside a principle that is reasonable, for one strange, harsh, and, at best, highly improbable. 3. His motives show his folly. These are, great impiety and great ignorance. 4. From their instability. They will not stand to them in time of great danger, or when death draws near. Affectation expires upon the death-bed. It is not in any man's power to extinguish the witness for God in himself. But they may do so for a while. Great and crying sins such as waste the conscience—sensuality and discontent with God's providence—lead to this. Therefore, beware of them. (*R. South, D.D.*) *The existence of God :—* The Psalm describes the deplorable corruption of universal human nature. It begins by declaring that the faculties of the soul are corrupt. "The fool hath said in his heart," and then it goes on to show the evil streams thence issuing—"abominable works." "The fool" signifies a vicious person, a wicked man. The speaking in the heart means his thoughts. "There is no God" does not so much deny His existence, though it amounts to that, as deny that there is any living ruler and governor of the world. This is to strip God of all His glory. And the motive of them who make the denial is evil—that they may be the more free to sin. Now, it is a great folly to deny the existence of God. For he denies what is attested on every hand, and what is made clearly known. Of old, men had many gods, now they say there is none. But the existence of God is the foundation of all religion. And it is well to be able to give reason for our belief, and to put down that secret atheism which lurks in us all, and to confirm in the faith those that love God. But, more particularly, note the atheist's folly. I. HE DENIES THE SENTIMENT OF ALL NATIONS BOTH IN THEIR JUDGMENT AND PRACTICE. 1. No nation has been without this belief. Idolatry, the worship of many gods, does not weaken this argument, but rather confirms it. The existence of God was never disputed, though nearly all things else were. 2. And it hath been a constant and uninterrupted consent ; for—(i) In all the changes and vicissitudes of governments, states, and modes of worship this has been maintained. (ii) Men's fears and anxieties would have led them to destroy it if possible ; there has been no want of will to do so. (iii) The devil deems it impossible to destroy it. When he tempted Adam, it was not to deny God but to become as God. 3. Such sentiment is natural and innate. For—(i) It could not be by mere tradition. For then we should have had told us not only the existence of God, but the right mode in which to worship Him. Why have men remembered this if it were tradition, and forgotten all the rest ? But even if it were, it was not an invention of the first man. If it had been, his posterity would soon have found it out. And why should he have invented it ? (ii) Neither was it by agreement and consent amongst the rulers of men. Why should they do so ? How could they so long maintain the imposture ? (iii) Nor was it man's fear that first introduced it. His fear did not create God, but God was the cause of his fear. II. HE DENIES THAT WHICH ALL THINGS IN THE WORLD MANIFEST. The Scriptures assert this (*Rom. i. 19, 20*). St. Paul does not say "are believed," but are "clearly seen." The world is like a large mirror which reflects the image of God (*Psa. viii. 1, xix. 1, 2*), &c. Now, the world does manifest God. 1. In the production of the creatures it contains (*Isa. xl. 12-19*). They could never have been their own cause. The world and every creature had a beginning (*Heb. xi. 3*). The matter of the world cannot be eternal. Nor time ; for all motion hath beginning, therefore the revolutions of our earth. Nor the generations of men and other creatures ; for no creature can make itself. Nothing can act before it be. That which doth not understand itself nor order itself could not make itself. If the first man made himself, why did he not make himself better ? why is he so limited and faulty ? If we made ourselves we can preserve ourselves, which we know we cannot. And why did not man create himself earlier, if he did so at all ? Therefore we accept the Scripture as giving us the most rational account of the matter. Then, further, no creature could make the world, no creature can create another. For if it create of nothing, then it is omnipotent and not a creature. If of matter, who formed the matter ? We are compelled to go back to a first Great Cause. Man cannot create man. If he could he would understand him, which he does not. There is, therefore, a first cause of things, which we call God. And this first cause must necessarily exist, and be infinitely perfect. III. HE DENIES THAT WHICH MAN'S OWN NATURE ATTESTS. 1. His bodily nature does. For see the order, fitness, and usefulness of every part—heart and mouth and brain, ear



and eye and tongue. And see, too, the admirable differences in the features of men. No two are alike. What vast advantage comes from this? 2. His soul does. For consider the vastness of its capacity, the quickness of its motions, its union with the body, and the operations of conscience. But all this proves the existence of God. The vastness of the desires in man is in evidence. For the desires of other creatures are fulfilled. "They are filled with good." Then shall man not be? IV. THEY DENY WHAT IS WITNESSED BY EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCES.

1. Judgments (Psa. ix. 16; Acts xii. 21), which occurrence Josephus also relates. 2. Miracles (Psa. lxx. 11, 18). "Who only doeth wondrous things." The truth of the Scriptures stands or falls with the miracles of which it tells. They must have been, or else the records are a pack of lies. 3. Accomplishment of prophecies (Isa. xli. 23, xlii. 10). V. USES OF ABOVE ARGUMENT. 1. If atheism be a folly it is a pernicious one; for it would root out the foundations of all government and introduce all evil and villainy. The two ever go together (Jer. iii. 21; Ezek. xxii. 12). To the atheist himself (Job xviii. 7 to the end). 2. How lamentable that atheism should be so common. But since all are tempted to it, let them remember—(i) It is impossible to prove that there is no God. (ii) Whosoever doubts of it makes himself a mark against which all creatures fight. All things condemn him. (iii) Atheists have been sometimes much afraid they were wrong. (iv) The motives of atheism are bad and vicious. (v) How unreasonable to run such risk. (vi) Have we done all we can to attain to the knowledge of God? 3. Let it be our wisdom to be settled in this truth. Therefore study God in His creatures as well as in His Word, and view Him in your own experience of Him. 4. If we believe, then worship Him and often think of Him. (*S. Charnock, B.D.*) *Practical atheism* :—

Unfold the conception which you have formed of the existence and attributes of God. 1. We all involve in our conception of God the idea of personality. 2. To this Infinite Being we involuntarily ascribe self-existence. 3. Both reason and revelation teach us to ascribe eternity to the Deity. 4. We ascribe to Him infinite and absolute power. 5. And omniscient wisdom. 6. And every moral attribute in infinite perfection. 7. He is revealed as the Father of the creatures He has made. The most astonishing manifestation of the goodness of God is made to us in the remedial dispensation. Evidently the existence of God, and especially of such a God as the Scriptures reveal, is by far the most practical truth of which we can possibly conceive. What, then, must be the condition of a man who believes in the existence of such a God, and yet suffers not this belief to exert any practical influence upon his conduct? (*F. Wayland.*) *Practical atheism* :—This is natural to man in his depraved state. Not natural to him as created, but as corrupt. And it is universal (Psa. lviii. 2; Rom. iii. 9–12). For the proof that atheism is natural to man we note—I. THAT MAN WOULD SET HIMSELF UP AS HIS OWN RULE INSTEAD OF GOD. For—1. He naturally disowns the rule God sets him. Every man naturally is a son of Belial. He would be without any law. Hence he desires not to know God's law. The purity of the Divine rule renders it nauseous to him; so impure is man's heart, and therefore atheistic likewise. Hence he neglects the means of knowledge, or endeavours to shake off as much as he has (Rom. i. 28). Or if he cannot do this he will not think of it, and his heart rises against God both inwardly and in outward art (ver. 4). What knowledge they seek for they desire only from impure motives. What they have they hold very loosely. One day it is "Hosannah," the next "Crucify Him." Some try to wrest their knowledge of God's truth to encourage their sin (2 Pet. iii. 16). But all this dislike to God's truth is a disowning of God as our rule. God's law cast against a hard heart is like a ball thrown against a stone wall, by reason of the resistance bounding farther from it. They show their contempt by their presumptuous transgression of the law, by their natural aversion to the declaration of God's will. That will they dislike and turn from. And this the more His will tends to His honour. 2. Man naturally owns any other rule rather than that of God. "They are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. iii. 4). They will prefer the rule of Satan. Or of the world, for this is evident from their regarding more the dictates of men than of God; and what regard they have for God's will, it is only because it is the world's will also, which they ever put before the will of God. But especially they prefer their own self-will. Self is the great opponent of God, the great Antichrist. 3. Man would make himself the rule for God, and give God law. We are willing He should be our Benefactor, but not our Ruler. This mind is seen in our striving against His law. In our disapproving the methods of His government. In impatience in regard to our own particular

concerns. Because Job did not do this he is commended (i. 22). In envying the gifts and prosperities of others. In praying importunately for things which we do not know will please God (Prov. vii. 14), or which we do know are contrary to His declared will. As when men pray to be saved, but neglect the means of salvation. Or when we try to bend God to our own will. In all these ways, and yet others, man shows that he would have God take rule from him, and not he from God.

II. AS MAN WOULD BE A LAW TO HIMSELF, SO ALSO WOULD HE BE HIS OWN END AND HAPPINESS. 1. For proof see his frequent self-applause (Rom. xii. 3, 4). His ascribing to himself the glory of every success. His desire to have self-pleasing doctrines. His concern if he is injured, but not if God is wronged. His self-trust. All this is a usurping of God's prerogatives, and a vilifying of God and destroying Him so far as man can. 2. Man would make anything his end rather than God. 3. Man would make himself the end of all creatures (Ezek. xxxviii. 2). 4. Man would make himself the end of God. He does so when he loves God only because God sends him good things, but would not if God sent him evil things. When he abstains from sin for his own sake, not because of God. When he renders duties for a mere selfish interest (Gen. xxxiv. 21, 22), which is evident from his reluctance to religion when self is not concerned (Job xxi. 15, xxxv. 3). And man's practical atheism is further shown in his unworthy imaginations of God, from which spring all idolatry, superstition, and presumption. And in his desire to be distant from God. Naturally we have no desire either to remember, converse with, return to, or imitate God. 5. The uses of the foregoing truths. They are—(i) For information, for they give us occasion to admire God's mercy, and justify His vengeance; they show our need of a new nature, how difficult conversion is. Also, the cause of unbelief in the Author of all grace; that there can be no justification by works, and the excellence of the Gospel. (ii) Exhortation: to labour, to be sensible of this lurking atheism, and watch against it. (*S. Charnock, B.D.*)

*Theoretical atheism*:—The denial of the existence of God may be either theoretical or practical. It is theoretical when we affirm that no such being as God exists. It is practical when, professing to believe that He exists, we act in all respects as though we believed that He does not exist. Theoretical folly may manifest itself in two forms, either in that of absurd credulity, or of absurd incredulity. 1. It is an evidence of absurd credulity to believe an assertion, respecting any subject whatever, when no evidence is brought forward to sustain it, and when, from the nature of the case, the evidence, if it did exist, is beyond the reach of the human understanding. Any one who reflects upon the fewness and feebleness of the faculties of man, and then upon the boundlessness of the universe, must be convinced that the assertion that God does not exist involves within itself all the elements of the most revolting absurdity. 2. Atheism is equally absurd in its unbelief. It disbelieves a proposition of which the evidence is interwoven with the very structure of the human understanding. (1) The idea of power, of cause and effect, is the universal and spontaneous suggestion of the human intelligence. It springs up unbidden and irrepressible from the first perception of a change. (2) The mind not only asks for a cause, but for a sufficient cause. (3) If we arrive at the notion of underived causation, may not several independent causes originate the changes which are taking place around us? Everything that we behold is manifestly a part of one universal whole. The cause of causes is everywhere one and the same. (4) When we reflect upon human conduct we find that we always connect the outward act with the spiritual disposition, or intention, from which it proceeds. In every action we perceive the quality of right or virtue, or of its opposite, wrong or vice. As the characteristics are universally the same there must be a single and universal standard. We see the perpetual acting of the Almighty and learn the moral attributes that compose His character. (*F. Wayland.*)

*Belief in the being of God*:—A belief in God as a self-existent, intelligent, and infinitely perfect Being is the basis of all religion. In what manner and through what means do we come by this conviction? Some have maintained the idea of God to be innate. Others assert the Divine existence to be an intuition—an immediate perception of the reason, independently of any suggestion, argument, or evidence. By others it has been attempted to establish it by the rigid steps of mathematical demonstration. Kant, and those who follow him, insist that the moral nature of man—his conscience and sense of moral obligation—affords conclusive proof of the being and moral government of God. We believe the true statement of the matter to be this: That the human mind is constitutionally fitted to know God, so that the notion of Him and a persuasion of His existence necessarily arise within the soul

whenever the faculties are in any good degree developed; and that in its own moral consciousness and in the great variety of facts and phenomena external to itself it finds, on reflection, proofs that He does exist, proofs of a moral nature, yet sufficient to establish the fact as an absolute certainty, in the view of the understanding. 1. It is a well-known fact that the idea of God and of spiritual existence is, and always has been, nearly or quite universal among mankind. 2. A belief in the existence of a God has always been found exceedingly difficult to be eradicated. 3. The more thoughtful, and especially the more virtuous, men are, the more, as a general rule, they are disposed to cherish the idea of a Supreme Being. 4. The atheistical idea, when fully and distinctly placed before the mind, is abhorrent to the moral feelings of the soul. 5. A belief in the existence of one supreme and perfect God is in a high degree elevating and happy in the influence which it exerts on the mind and heart of man, while the views of atheism have tended only to demoralisation and debasement. There is a God; it is only the fool who denies it in his heart. (*R. Palmer, D.D.*) *Practical atheism*.—This is God's world, and yet how godless. God made it and the men in it, and yet "in all their thoughts God is not." The origin of this alienation is in the heart, and the subject of it is pronounced a fool. His heart is just what it would be were there no God. Inquire—I. TO WHOM THIS CHARGE MAY BE APPLIED. 1. To the avowed atheist. He who sees the proofs of God in creation and can yet deny Him, can neither love nor fear Him. 2. To those who entertain false views of His character. They deny that He is the righteous Governor of the moral world. But this is much the same as to say, "There is no God." 3. To those who deny or disregard the providential government of God. He lives without God in the world. 4. To those who supremely love the world. Is this treating God as He ought to be treated? 5. Who have no delight in the worship of God. They act the part of atheism. 6. Or who live in disobedience to God. They act upon a principle which subverts the sovereignty of God. 7. All who reject the Gospel. By his unbelief the man makes God a liar. What more could the avowed atheist do? And there are yet other characteristics. But note—II. THE FOLLY OF THESE MEN. This appears—1. From the fact that there may be a God. No man, unless he himself is omnipresent and omniscient, can know that there is not somewhere some other being to whom these attributes belong. If there be no God, the believer suffers no loss; but if there be, then the atheist is undone. 2. His belief is contrary to the fullest evidence. He shuts his eyes and stops his ears. 3. They deprive themselves of all real good. For without faith in God there can be no rational enjoyment of the world. Nor can there be true excellence of character. For he places himself beyond the reach of every motive which ennoble character and elevates man to the end of his being. Without God there is no rule of action, no accountability, no futurity, no retribution, no influence to operate on man for his spiritual good. And he must become supremely selfish. The spirit may be concealed in its true nature and tendency. But take off the garb, let the real selfish heart be uncovered, let it be seen in its true character, and we abhor it. And he has no support under affliction or support on the bed of death. But believe in God and how altered affliction and death become. A man may have lived an infidel, but for the most part he dies a terrified believer. How must he feel, when death comes, who admits that there is a God, and yet that he has lived as if there were none? Beware of that eternity which is opening on you. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *Religion and materialism*.—In David's time it was "the fool" who said there was no God; in ours, it is the philosopher who proclaims it upon the housetop, and invites us all to bask in the mild light of the science which has made this as its last and highest discovery. Some may think it out of our way to advert to discussions which touch the very foundations of our faith and of all religious belief whatsoever, because we feel our faith to be too firmly fixed that we should be perplexed by any such questions. But we can never tell how near us these questions may come, or in what shape we may find them meeting us. You may have seen a coat and hat which at their beginning were articles of handsome clothing, and were worn on Sundays and in good society, descending through various vicissitudes, until at last, perched on a stick in a turnip field, they performed the disingenuous function of a scarecrow; and just so an opinion or a theory which was at first started on a solemn occasion, and by a philosopher, may filter down through minds of less intelligence until, half understood and misapplied, it serves only to mislead, and fulfils purposes altogether different from those which it served originally. I have found far down in the ranks of society such distortions of



opinions and speculations which were safe enough in learned hands, but full of practical mischief in those that are unlearned. Now it is religion that is at stake in this question of modern materialism; religion not only as a faith but as a morality. If it be true, all religions are mere impostures. Note its theory of the origin of life. You know the theory the Bible teaches, that God is the Lord and giver of life. And it would not be essentially contradicted even were the theory of development fully proved, as it is not yet. Suppose that man is developed from a baboon, and differs from it not in kind but only in degree. Yet you could not mark the stage at which the spirit of God was inbreathed. But that makes all the difference. There may have been inferior types before man's outward organism was complete, before God said, "Let us make man." Development does not deny Scripture truth. But the new theory is different. It ascribes all to "matter," affirms that it contains within itself "the promise and the potency" of all life, and that it is eternal; that there is, in fact, no such thing as an eternal mind but that which we call "matter," which we can see, handle, weigh, analyse, is that and that only which is from everlasting to everlasting, and is Divine if anything is to be so called. They who say all this set aside Scripture as incredible and irrelevant, for they do not believe in God and a spiritual world; nor in anything which their scales cannot weigh, their process analyse, their figures calculate. "But," we ask, "why is eternal matter more credible than an eternal mind?" Both cannot be, but why should we be shut up to the materialist's creed? We find it easier and better to believe in an eternal and Holy Spirit which devised all the forms and laws of life than in an eternity of senseless atoms, without spirit, without intelligence, without life, coming together somehow, and somehow forming this world and all things we see. And it and it only provides a basis for religious life. Materialism is the death of morality. For it gets rid of the idea of God, and so of His judgment to which I am accountable, of conscience and my spiritual nature by which I was in some sense a law to myself. Farewell to all dreams of a higher life, to all aspirations after the Divine. "Let us eat and drink, for," &c. This the natural conclusion. All our Christian ideas are fictions, "the baseless fabric of a vision" which ought to and which will fade utterly away. It is easy for a man, a man possibly of dull spiritual perceptions, standing amid all the light of revelation and on the safe and serene height of Christian civilisation, to follow out physical investigations to the point to which his knowledge can conduct him, and then to turn round and say, "I have tracked life almost within sight of its very source, and I see no hand of any God in it, and no indication of any spirit; but let us pursue our researches in a pure and just temper, and let us strive to elevate our life and to live nobly"; but he forgets that, but for the revelation of that God whose existence he denies, purity and justice would be as little known among men as among the lion and the tiger, and the higher life as impossible an idea to a human creature as to an ostrich or an ape. But the history of man shows that the elevating power has been the spiritual, and that his belief in the unseen has been the parent of the noblest achievements of his life. Take these away and he sinks at once. Ponder, therefore, much ere you abandon the Bible for the teachings of this new science. (*R. N. Storey, D.D.*) *The creed of atheism*:—The creed is one of the briefest ever penned—"No God." Its practical result is the saddest ever recorded—"No hope" (Eph. ii. 10). Deprive us of a personal God and you render life an enigma, begun without an author, pursued without a motive, and ending without a hope. Are there any who hold such a gloomy creed? Arrange them into four classes—1. The heathen, who are ignorant of God. They acknowledge not one God, but many. To them every department of nature has its presiding deity, to whom homage is paid. They have not been enlightened by the beams of revelation. How far are the heathen to blame for continuing in their ignorance? How far are the works of creation a guide to men in finding out God? There is wrapped up in nature a Divine revelation, which mankind may read by exercising their faculties. 2. Atheists, who deny the existence of God. They assume towards Divine things an attitude of active antagonism. Not liking to retain God in their knowledge, they willfully give themselves over to conduct in defiance of His laws. Their conduct springs from wish rather than conviction. You may shut your eyes to the sunlight, but the sun still shines; you may deny God's existence, but God remains. It may be doubted whether there is such a person as a positive denier of God, an atheist from intellectual conviction. To say "There is no God" necessitates a claim too sweeping for a reasonable man to make, for it implies that he who makes it has himself been in every corner of the universe at one and the same time, and failed

to discover the Divine Being. Is any one prepared to make such a claim?

3. Agnostics, who say we have no knowledge of God. A numerous class. Their creed is a negative one. They differ from atheists in this, that while the creed of pure atheism is positive denial of God, agnosticism consists, roughly speaking, in making no assertion, positive or negative, respecting the Divine existence, but merely in taking up a position of passive intellectual indifference. He simply "does not know"; God has not made Himself known with sufficient clearness. The agnostic creed resolves itself into an attempt to trace everything to natural causes, and thus dispense with the supernatural, and that is virtually to banish God from the universe. The senses are proposed as the test of truth. But to say that all our knowledge comes through the senses is not sound philosophy. Is there no such thing as intuitive knowledge, knowledge that comes to us neither through experience nor through proof? It is idle for the sceptic to talk of the inadequacy of evidence. What he wants is the disposition to weigh the evidence he has got.

4. Nominal Christians, who disregard the claims of God. A sound creed is no sure guarantee for upright conduct. There are sham professors. Among professing Christians there is an alarming amount of practical atheism. A man's denial of God may assume a variety of forms. Application, applying equally to the four classes. (1) They have no guide in life. (2) They have no hope in death. We decline to accept a gospel of despair. (*D. Merson, M.A.*)

*Atheisms and atheisms*:—This text is much misunderstood; but some people take a wilful delight in using it. To tell every one who does not believe in God that he is a fool is charming, it saves all argument; after that assertion argument is useless. But there are atheisms and atheisms. They differ widely in character, and the atheism of one man may be better than the theism of another. Belief in what men have called God, and enthusiasm for what men have called religion, have more embittered the human heart, have caused more bloodshed, and have damned more hopes than all the atheisms the world has seen. The atheistical tree has grown no more folly than the papistical tree. Do you think there is any other atheism than the one of which you and I are constantly guilty—the atheism of living without God in the world? Is it a thing to be angry at that a brother has lost the hope and love and faith which are so sweet to us? Should we not grieve for such a man according to the largeness of the faith we hold? The very fulness of our blessing should be the measure of our pity. I can find no scorn for him who has lost the basis of faith, the occasion of hope, the consolation of sorrow. Another gracious theological business is to tell every man who says he does not believe in God that he wants no God, that he elects to live in darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil. I need not go abroad to learn that evil living dims faith; but to say that it is not possible for any man to come to this conclusion without being an evil liver is to tell a simple lie. Cannot you see the unspeakable difficulty of reconciling all we see and know with theological belief? The man who thinks may never fail to find the grief which underlies all things, but may sadly fail to find the master hand that guides the whole. Without faith what can man do in such a world? The God our theologians show us is fearful, incomprehensible, and only to be wondered at. (*George Dawson, M.A.*)

*Is there a God?*—I. GOD IS PROVABLE BY NATURE. The very commonness of nature causes us to regard it as a thing of course, rather than a thing of God. Nature, no doubt, is a great mystery; and man, even when developed into a philosopher, is a very small affair. But we are so constituted that we cannot help believing nature to be an outflow and effect of a Divine cause, whatever opinion we may hold of the design argument. Our instincts are stronger than our logic, and our intuitions than our metaphysics. Let the heart say there is no God, and the head will give it the lie; or let the head say there is no God, and in wrath the heart stands up and says, "There is."

II. GOD IS PROVABLE FROM HISTORY. Do not nations know, do not individuals know, do not you and I know, that man proposes, but God disposes? Whilst the world was drowning, and Noah was floating, was a God not ruling? A God, you may seek Him among the stars, but you will find Him best among the incidents of your own life. Circumstances reign, but God rules.

III. GOD IS PROVABLE FROM THE SOUL. A world long lacking its man would not be a God's world. God has moved, a soul has been created, an image has been stamped, and there is a man. Mind only could produce mind—a living God only could produce a living man. Therefore, having man and his attributes before us, we must admit a God. Man shows forth God. A soul without a God is an impossibility.

IV. GOD IS PROVABLE FROM CONSCIENCE. The wonderful moral faculty of the soul. It is a marvellous

thing to see a Newton soaring among the stars ; but it is a more marvellous thing to see a wayfaring man tremble under a sense of sin. Conscience makes cowards of us all by morally demonstrating that there is a God to punish and a hell to be punished in. V. GOD IS PROVEABLE FROM REVELATION. Amid the variety of circumstances which tell us of a God, revelation stands out in marked prominence as a more excellent way. From other sources we get, as it were, the pure white light of Deity ; but from the revelation source we get the bright rays themselves. (*W. R. Graham.*) *On the atheism of the heart* :—The term “fool” is not to be confined to one who is really deprived of the exercise of reason. We must understand it of the sinner ; not merely of him who is addicted to the habits of vice and to a life of gross impiety, but of every one who is under the power of the natural wickedness of his heart, under the dominion of sin, or in an unrenewed state, although his life should be externally sober and blameless. It is declared of the spiritual fool that he hath said in his heart “There is no God.” These words do not express the persuasion of the sinner, but his affection and desire. He is not convinced that there is no God, but he wishes that there were none.

I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUBJECT. There cannot be a speculative atheist in the world. By a speculative atheist is meant one who is firmly convinced in his mind that there is no God. The works of creation contain so powerful a demonstration of the existence of the Supreme Being that a man must wilfully shut his eyes ere he can presume to deny it. This truth is further demonstrated by the tendency of all earthly things to destruction. The dictates of conscience afford the same testimony. There have been, and there are, many heart-atheists ; those who, although they do not in their judgments disbelieve this fundamental doctrine, yet ardently wish in their hearts that they had no ground to believe it. There are many practical atheists ; men who, although they believe the being of God, live as if there was none. Their life is a practical denial of His being, because it is a life of impiety. Every man is naturally an atheist in heart. The natural atheism of the heart is greatly confirmed and increased by continuance in sin. There is even atheism in the heart of every believer.

II. EVERY NATURAL MAN IS UNDER THE POWER OF HEART-ATHEISM. 1. This appears from his neglect of religious duties. 2. The power of heart-atheism appears by hypocrisy. 3. This corruption of the heart breaks out in the profanity and sensuality of the life. 4. By perjury. 5. Sinners discover the atheism of their hearts by the false apprehensions they entertain of the justice and mercy of God. 6. And by not being influenced in their conduct by an impression of the Divine omnipresence and omniscience. 7. By their disregard of God's threatening law. 8. By their rejection of the Gospel. 9. By their contempt of the godly.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HEART-ATHEISM. It tends—1. To apostasy from the true faith. The ground of faith in the doctrines of Holy Scripture, in opposition to those of error, must be the authority and faithfulness of God speaking in His Word. 2. To produce an apprehension that there is no truth in Divine revelation, and that all religion is a human device. 3. To give loose rein to all manner of iniquity. 4. To produce unreasonable and ill-grounded fears. 5. To drive to despair. It is the atheism of the heart, taken in one point of view, that makes the sinner imagine there is no mercy for him. 6. To hurry men into eternal perdition. Exhort (1) those who are freed from the dominion of this corruption to pray earnestly for deliverance from its remaining power. (2) Strive to resist atheistical thoughts. (3) Beware of indulging secret sins. (4) Implore a continued sense of the presence of God on your mind. (*J. Jamieson, M.A.*)

*The unreasonableness and mischief of atheism* :—Whether a man be convinced or not of the being of a God, of a Providence, and future judgment, yet not to believe them with the heart so as to practise and live according to such a belief, is a very great folly.

1. It is a great folly to believe practically in the things above specified. 2. It is a great folly to say there are no such things, and to endeavour to persuade others so. (*W. Talbot, D.D.*)

*Infidelity illogical* :—“If you meet with an atheist,” says Dr. Farrar, “do not let him entangle you into the discussion of side-issues. As to many points which he raises you must make the Rabbi's answer, ‘I do not know.’ But ask him these seven questions—1. Ask him, what did matter come from ? Can a dead thing create itself ? 2. Ask him, where did motion come from ? 3. Ask him, where life came from save the fingers-tips of Omnipotence ? 4. Ask him, whence came the exquisite order and design in nature ? If one told you that millions of printer's types should fortuitously shape themselves into the Divine comedy of Dante or the plays of Shakespeare, would you think him a madman ? 5. Ask him, whence came consciousness ? 6. Ask him, who gave you free will ?



7. Ask him, whence came conscience? He who says there is no God in the face of these questions talks simply stupendous nonsense. This, then, is one of the things which cannot be shaken, and remain. From this belief in God follow the belief in God's providence, the belief that we are His people, the sheep of His pasture." (*The Young Man.*) *An infidel silenced*.—A London clergyman met with an infidel who wished all the churches were swept from the land, beginning with Spurgeon's. "Then which of your infidels will be the first to take upon himself the responsibility of Mr. Spurgeon's orphanage?" was the clergyman's reply. The silence following the question was very expressive. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) **They are corrupt.**—*The moral condition of mankind*.—I. AS LAMENTABLY DEPRAVED. 1. A negative description of depravity. It is godless. All sinners are practical atheists. Practical atheism is a thousand times worse than theoretical. It is worthless. The essence of a good work lies in its motive; where God is not there is not, there cannot be, any virtuous motive. It is thoughtless. They do not think of the right subjects in the right way. It is prayerless. How should they call upon Him whose existence they practically deny? True prayer is a soul habitude, and thus the wicked never pray. 2. A positive description of it—Foolish. Sin and folly are convertible terms; what is morally wrong in principle must always be inexpedient in action. Widespread. The prevalence, but not absolute universality of depravity is implied. Undoubtedly real. Depravity is not a theological fiction, not a mere hypothesis, but a fact attested by Omniscience. Transgression. The depraved are called "workers of iniquity." They work at it habitually. Putrescent. The sinner is frequently represented in the Bible as dead. II. AS PROSPECTIVELY HOPEFUL. Deliverance was to come. There is a deliverance planned for the world. It will be—1. Like an emancipation. 2. This deliverance is intensely desired. 3. It comes from God. 4. It will be the occasion of universal joy. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. **They are all gone aside.**—*Man falls lower and lower*.—The mind and heart having gone astray—having been turned aside like a deceitful bow,—nothing became easier than to sink into ever-deepening abysses of iniquity; the case is put also negatively, so as to fill up the measure of the great accusation, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Man cannot stop in a morally negative condition. Again and again this solemn lesson has been forced upon us by the whole current of history, and yet an insidious temptation assails the heart with the thought that it is still possible to forsake religious convictions and professions, and yet to preserve a pure and noble life. The backslider and the truth-seeker must never be regarded as one and the same person. God having been surrendered as the supreme thought of the mind and the supreme rule of conduct, a scene of infinite confusion presented itself: workers of iniquity carried on their evil service as if in darkness; their mouths were opened in cruelty upon any who feared and worshipped God; the counsel of the poor was treated with contempt, and the poor themselves were devoured rapaciously. Where reverence has been abandoned it has been impossible to sustain true and self-sacrificing philanthropy. In this case reverence has been formally given up, and so a great act of moral spoliation has been accomplished. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) **There is none that doeth good, no, not one.**—*Man fallen and depraved*.—I. THE INBORN DEPRAVITY OF OUR NATURE. 1. What saith the Scripture? 2. The records of human experience are to the same effect. See the moral misery of the world. Look at the evidence of our inborn depravity in the manifold outbreaks of wickedness in every age and circumstance of life. Notice also the corruption and infirmity which is found remaining even in good men. We cannot read the sins of Abraham, and David, and Peter, and Moses without many painful and humiliating thoughts. Who can stand if they fell? II. IN WHAT DOES THIS ORIGINAL DEPRAVITY OF OUR NATURE CHIEFLY CONSIST? 1. In the depravation of our intellectual faculties. The mind of our race has become blinded. Civilisation gives no Divine knowledge. 2. In the perversion and rebellion of the will. By the will we understand the commanding faculty of the soul by which it chooses or rejects anything that may be offered to it. 3. In our disordered and alienated affections. Such a threefold cord against God and holiness we might well fear could not be broken. But thanks be to God, there is one who can break it. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

Vers. 4-6. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?—*Conscience*.—

I. CONSCIENCE INFORMED. It is quite true that the workers of iniquity seem like brute beasts, as if they had no common sense, no conscience; but they had these gifts, and it is this fact which renders their conscience so dark. 1. We sin against our understanding. Our reason protests against sin. 2. We sin against conscience. Our moral sense echoes the words and thunders of Sinai, and protests against transgression. 3. We sin against experience. Our history shows how all that is desirable and honourable lies in the path of obedience, and how paths of transgression are paths of misery and shame. Sin is not a mistake or a misfortune, but a crime. II. CONSCIENCE ASLEEP. 1. Asleep as to men (ver. 4). 2. Asleep as to God. "Call not upon the Lord." Thus men stifle their moral sense, and live neither fearing God nor regarding man. III. CONSCIENCE AROUSED (ver. 5). Men awake to find that "God is in the generation of the righteous." All is true that the righteous held, and the angry God is ready to avenge Himself on the proud sinner. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)

### PSALM XV.

VERS. 1-5. *Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle?—An ideal worshipper:—* The ideal worshipper of Jehovah is painted in this Psalm in a few broad outlines. The tone of the Psalm accords with the circumstances of the time when David brought the ark to Jerusalem. The two main points are: the conception of the guests of Jehovah, and the statement of the ethical qualifications of these. The Psalmist consults the Master of the House as to the terms on which He extends hospitality, which terms it is His right to prescribe. The character of the God determines the character of the worshipper. The roots of ethics are in religion. The Old Testament ideal of the righteous man flows from its revelation of the righteous God. Not men's own fancies, but insight gained by communion with God, and docile inquiry of Him will reliably tell what manner of men they are who can abide in His light. Ver. 2 sums up the qualifications of Jehovah's guest in one comprehensive demand, that he should walk uprightly, and then analyses that requirement into the two of righteous deeds and truthful speech. True, the ideal here is not the full Christian one. It is too merely negative for that, and too entirely concerned with acts. Therein it reproduces the limitation of the earliest revelation. . . . Usury and bribery were common sins, as they still are in communities on the same industrial and judicial level as that mirrored in the Psalm. The Psalmist, in the last verse, clearly recognises that such a character as he has outlined not only dwells in Jehovah's tent, but will stand unmoved though all the world should rock. Righteousness is the one stable thing in the universe. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The good citizen:—* The qualities which are required of one, not who visits the tabernacle merely, but who dwells in it,—not who ascends the hill only, but rests on it,—are those of an ordinary citizen, those without which a man cannot fulfil any of his common duties in the world. Nay, the qualities are chiefly negative. It is not said that he must be brave, magnanimous, ready to sacrifice himself. He is not to be corrupt in his life, not to take reward against the innocent, not to lie. One of the conditions reads as if it were drawn merely from the civil code of the nation. We have talked as if people might be very good in all relations with their neighbours, and yet not be servants of God. They must be something over and above true citizens for this. But the Old Testament books never teach this. They say boldly, "You are not honest and straightforward in your dealings, and so you think God is the same with you. You do not trust Him. You do not confess your sins to Him, nor draw nigh to His holy hill." And has the New Testament altered this? Does it teach another lesson? No doubt there is this, that it teaches more perfectly how we may rise up out of our old evil habits; how God has revealed His righteousness in Christ for the remission of sins. But He has revealed His righteousness, and no unrighteousness can have fellowship with Him. Christ is our help to this righteousness, that we may share His nature. Now, do we agree to this? Then let us rejoice and sing; for Christ has ascended on high, that we might be delivered from our old evil life, and that we might possess a righteous life in Him. But if this is not what we want, if we want a religion that will make us easy and comfortable in the frauds which belong to our different

crafts and professions,—if the shopkeeper lifts up his voice loudly in the denunciation of Popery or some unpopular opinion, that he may more securely and with less sense of self-reproach adulterate his goods, and use the false weight and the deceitful balances which are abominable,—then we ought to be told, one and all of us, that the hill of Sinai, with all its thunders, is not more terrible than the Zion on which God dwells; that the New Testament is not more but less tolerant of such practices than the Old, and that God will appear as a swift witness against our crimes and falsehoods. And this not because we are wanting in some transcendent qualities which men have dreamed of as befitting a Church, but because we have those qualities which are the death of nations. But many look upon the nation and the Church as scarcely compatible, indeed, as mostly the opposites of each other. No doubt that with the theory of some in regard to the Church they are opposites. But a nation is pledged to maintain a wholesome, practical, manly morality, entirely opposed to that morality of “touch not, taste not, handle not” which a Church such as I have described must by its nature favour, and has always favoured in fact,—a morality consistent with the grossest deviations from common truth and honesty. And I solemnly conjure Protestant assertors of individual holiness to see well to it that by their teaching they are not hindering the great protest against idolatry which is involved in the very existence of a nation; whether they are not substituting certain capricious and artificial maxims for the homely morality of the Bible, and whether thus they may not be preparing their sons for that very system which they most dread. But, on the other hand, I would maintain that a holy Catholic Church, in its truest, widest, deepest sense, does lie beneath the holy and righteous nation; that they are not contraries, but that one is the vestibule to the other; that each is the support of the other; that this Church is no imaginary utopian society, no artificial society, but a real society constituted in Christ our ascended Lord. Thus the ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father, that He might fill all things, is the meeting-point between these two Divine principles, these two human societies. In it we find the consummation of all the expectations and hopes of the old world, that in it we might find the beginning of all that is purest and holiest in the new. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Who shall abide with God?*—Religious people are concerned to know, for their own comfort, whom God will receive at last into His own tabernacle above. I. ABIDING IN GOD’S TABERNACLE. Or, dwelling upon His holy hill. We understand these expressions as meaning God’s residence in heaven. Who, then, shall dwell with God in glory everlasting? Let us take heed to our ways, and walk with care and endeavour, by God’s grace, to make our calling and selection sure, that so an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

II. THE ANSWER TO THIS EARNEST INQUIRY. Those who walk uprightly, and work righteousness, and speak the truth in their hearts. An heir of heaven walks with God as reconciled to Him, and walks uprightly, *i.e.* sincerely and honestly. If we work righteousness we must have a principle of righteousness implanted in us by the saving grace of God. The expression, “speaking the truth in the heart,” is strikingly singular. It shows that people may speak the truth, and yet the heart not love it; but all Christian believers are inwardly what they appear outwardly. (*R. Horsfall.*) *The Church militant*:—This is a question by David propounded. Consider—1. Who demandeth, David, the man of God, seeing the wonderful hypocrisy of men in frequenting the holy assemblies, and making a pretence of religion, being stirred up with singular love to true religion, inflamed with a fervent zeal to God’s glory, burning with earnest desire to know the true saints from dissembling hypocrites, and demanded this question—“Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, who shall rest in Thy holy hill?” 2. Of whom he demandeth. He fieth unto God, because it passeth the knowledge of men, who only look into the things apparent and outward. The Lord alone can sunder the wheat from the chaff, the tares from the wheat, the grain from the cockle and darnel. It is the Lord who is Father of all the whole family, which is named either on heaven or on earth, which is His Church; it is the Lord that is the chief Governor and Ruler of His house, which are His subjects; it is God alone who keepeth the Book of Life in the closet of His own heart, wherein He hath registered all His saints. It is the Lord, and not men, which pitched the tabernacle and testimony of His presence. It is the Lord whose property and prerogative it is by right to know the heart. It is the Lord whose eyes are upon all His creatures.

3. What is demanded. By “tabernacle” here some understand the Church militant. By the “hill of God” they understand the Church triumphant. The



question then is, "Who shall I make some reckoning of, to be Thy Church visible and militant?" The Church of God militant here on earth is compared to the tabernacle, and to the holy hill of God. 1. To the tabernacle. This Moses reared. As the tabernacle was pitched here and there, and removed from place to place, so the Church militant hath no certain rest in any appointed place, but is now in this place, now in that, at the appointment of the Lord. As in the time of the ark and tabernacle, God there sheweth Himself and His glory unto the people, so doth the Lord reveal Himself in the Church and Assembly of His saints, there declaring His glory. As the Lord promised by Moses to dwell in the tabernacle, and there to walk and be conversant with Israel His people, so does Almighty God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son, our Saviour, dwell in the Church which is His immaterial tabernacle. The Church and Assembly of God's saints is called the House of God, because He dwelleth therein. The Church militant is also compared unto a hill or mountain. 1. For the allusion that it hath unto Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, being Mount Moriah, where Abraham would have sacrificed his son Isaac. This hill was a type of the true Church, among whom God dwelleth for ever. 2. The Church may be called a hill or mountain, for the height, altitude, and lifting up thereof. 3. And for the open sight thereof. 4. In regard of the strength and stayedness, the Church may be called a mountain, for the hilly and high places are most strong and most impregnable. The Church is called a "holy hill," because God hath sanctified it and made it holy for Himself, because in the Church the Lord giveth manifold testimonies and signs of His holiness, and because the Lord taketh the defence of His Church into His own hands. Doctrines.—1. See how great the hypocrisy of man oftentimes is in the pretence of godliness. 2. The prophet flieth unto God in the discerning of the true saints from hypocrites. However apparent things may be known unto men, hidden things belong only unto the Lord. 3. Learn not to play the hypocrite. 4. When we lack wisdom we should flee unto God for instruction. 5. Learn the state and condition of the militant Church. It is but as a tabernacle. 6. In this world the saints must not look for any rest, continuance, or certain abode. 7. We must not forsake the Church of God because of afflictions and troubles. 8. Who shall rest in the holy hill of God? The Church militant rejoices in the hope of happiness to come. 9. There is no true and sound rest save in the holy hill of God. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Earth as seen from the holy hill of communion with God:*—Unto this mountain, if we should ascend but in thought, as Scipio once did in his dream, and from thence should behold the earth, we should easily condemn this inferior world with the desires thereof. For the whole globe of the earth, together with the water, which seemeth now so great unto us, if we could see it from the highest heavens, would appear unto us like a mote in the sun. But if withal we felt the unspeakable joys of heaven, and from thence should cast down our eyes unto this valley of tears, there to behold the vanity of vanities, as Solomon saith, it cannot be expressed with how fervent a desire we should be inflamed to have our habitation in heaven. Peter, when as he was present in the transfiguration of Christ in the Mount Thabor, and had a taste of the heavenly glory, he was straightway ravished therewith, and desired greatly to remain there. "Lord," saith he, "it is good being here, let us make three tabernacles," &c. (*G. Downname.*) *Dwelling on the holy hill:*—Our abode in the mountain of God is expressed in the word "dwelling," whereby two things are signified, perpetuity and rest. Perpetuity, for there the children of God remain not as pilgrims for a time, but as citizens and heirs for ever. Whereupon the kingdom of heaven is also called an heavenly inheritance, wherein are everlasting habitations, and an inheritance immortal and undefiled, and that fadeeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. Again, the word "dwelling" importeth rest. For there the children of God do not wander as pilgrims, neither are subject to any molestations, but do wholly rest from their labours. And for that cause the kingdom of heaven is called the rest of God, and as it were an eternal Sabbath. In respect whereof the land of Canaan was a type of our heavenly country. (*Ibid.*) *The soul of man turned towards heaven:*—Man is a mirror, and it is an all-important matter which way the mirror is turned. If downwards, it can reflect only earthly things,—the mire, the dirt, the filth of the earth; if turned upward, it may reflect the heavens, with all its glory of sun, moon, and stars. The mirror turned downward is the carnal mind, the mirror turned upward is the spiritual mind. Sometimes in an instant of time the inversion is accomplished, and he who before was of the earth earthy, comes to discern and reflect the things of God and heaven. (*A. T. Pierson, D.D.*) *A question and an answer:*—Question: Who is the man

who would be able to ascend unto that hill of God where the highest visions of the Almighty may be perceived? The answer is: The man whose life is blameless. All that follows is a description of the moral qualifications of such a man. What is striking in the Psalm is the moral principle which seems to underlie it. There are laws in the spiritual kingdom, and the Psalmist gets a glimpse of these spiritual laws, and he makes them the subject of his poem. The law here is this, that the condition of power in life, and the condition of the vision of the Almighty, is to be found in the ethical or moral considerations. It is the man whose life is blameless, the man whose character will bear investigation, the man whose whole being and nature are animated by a strict regard of what is morally right and true, that comes by degrees to this possession of strong invincible character, and that capacity for seeing the highest things of God. There is no idea here that the Psalmist can purchase the vision of God by the payment of so much good done. To do that would have been to vitiate the whole moral basis of the idea; for if a man seeks heaven for profit he is not, of course, a heavenly-minded person. Morality and spirituality must be genuine and sincere if they are to be moral or spiritual things at all. What the Psalmist does set forth is this, that the conditions of this insight and power of life lie, not so much in the possession of intellectual force as in the possession of moral capacities. There is a constant tendency to confuse religion with theology. Theology is only the scientific expression of the ideas which are incorporated in religion. Religion itself is quite different. A man may be religious who has very small theological opinions. Our power of seeing Divine things does not depend so much upon our moral integrity as upon our spiritual devotion. Religion is a moral sympathy between the soul of the creature and the spirit of the Creator. It is the moral sympathy between you and me in this world and the great God who put us into this world. That is what is said in the Gospel of St. John, "If any man will do His will,"—if a man has a moral desire to follow out the Divine ideal in his life, if his soul is in sympathy with the Divine moral earnestness, then he shall be able to understand; he will gain a perception of the meaning of God's action, and the vision of God which would otherwise be denied him. Observe the wonderful way in which the same thought underlies the great creation of the Italian poet. This Psalm is a sort of "Divine Comedy" in miniature, for it exactly expresses the thought which Dante had in his mind. What are the conditions, according to Dante, in which a man can enter into the vision of the great paradise over his head? He must have understood evil, and seen it in all its hideousness, and must have overcome and climbed that steep of purgatory, disciplining by degrees the moral defects in him, until at last, when he climbs to the summit of the mount of purgatory, he is the immovable man, the man who is crowned with crown and mitre, as god over himself. And only when that is achieved, when that moral sincerity is at last made a real thing in him, is he capable of ascending under the guidance of Divine truth into the lofty regions of paradise. This is exactly the same thought. What an enormous source of joy that ought to be to the human heart. Let us remember that we have within us a Divine Spirit that is constantly prompting us to higher things. (*W. Boyd Carpenter, D.D.*) *Practical Christianity*:—Religion is not a far-off, but a pressing and everyday affair. The very humblest of mankind may be the greatest saint of God. It is only small and ignorant natures which shrink from lowly tasks. Nothing can be ignoble which a noble purpose glorifies. In this Psalm you have the things necessary for the man who may claim the high blessing of God. What are they? Strange to say, they are precisely those things that we should demand of the ordinary English gentleman, of the ordinary English tradesman, of the ordinary English working man. Mere morality, you may say, and for the most part, negative morality. David does not say he was to be brave, magnanimous, self-sacrificing. He only says that he must not be a liar or a slanderer, or one who wrongs others, or takes rewards against the innocent. You may be tempted to say, surely David puts the scale too low! Had, then, David a less overwhelming sense than we have of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity? If you think in that way to get over the difficulty you are mistaken. But is it really so small a thing to keep innocency and do the thing which is right? The New Testament speaks, over and over again, identically the same language. David's truth, and the truth of Christ Himself, is, that those who desire to be one with God, every one who nameth the name of Christ, must, as the first essential, depart from iniquity. You cannot escape these conclusions by saying, "Yes, Christ spake these things before, and not after, His great work was finished, and would have preached otherwise if He had preached after His resurrection." If

you make that answer you subject yourselves to the overwhelming refutation of Scripture. See the Epistle of James, the Lord's brother. See also the loftiest and most spiritual of St. Paul's Epistles, that to the Ephesians. If you would rest in God's holy hill this is quite certain, you must keep innocency, and do the things that are right. (*Dean Farrar.*) *The citizen of Zion described:*—The Psalm consists of a question and an answer. David asks the question. He was a good man, concerned for his own soul. He asks it of the Lord, for He is the infallible Teacher and Law-giver. He asks it in Old Testament terms, speaking of the tabernacle and the holy hill of Mount Zion. The doctrine arising from the words is this—It challengeth every one's most serious consideration what sort of persons, sojourning with God here, shall be inhabitants of heaven hereafter. Therefore let us—1. SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS CONSIDERATION. 1. That all shall not be inhabitants of heaven; some will perish. For all the sons of men will not be saints in heaven. There will be a great company on Christ's left hand at the great day, doomed to everlasting fire (Matt. xxv. 41). And many of those who are now about the tabernacle will be amissing in heaven (Matt. vii. 21-23). To see those who had not the tabernacle of God among them fall short of heaven is not strange; but many who in external privileges have been exalted to heaven will be brought down to hell (Psa. cxxv., ult.). 2. They are persons of a distinguished character now who shall be inhabitants of heaven hereafter. Not of the common gang of the world, nor of professors either. Many professors are foolish virgins, that will get heaven's door cast in their face (Matt. xxv. 2-4). 3. In this world they sojourn with God in His tabernacle who shall be the inhabitants of heaven hereafter. The world is no more their home. They are in a peculiar manner consecrated to God and His service (Rom. xii. 1). All Israel had access to the outer courts of the tabernacle, but the priests only to the tabernacle itself. They are admitted to communion with God in ordinances. And they will enter heaven because they are born from above. II. THE REASONS WHEREFORE WE SHOULD THUS SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WHO SHALL BE THE INHABITANTS OF HEAVEN. 1. Because there is a heaven and a hell, and all must land in one or the other. 2. And the laws of heaven admit only such as are qualified for it. 3. None who are capable of such considerations will ever see heaven without it. The work of grace begins here (Lam. iii. 40). 4. If we miss heaven we are ruined eternally. III. APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT. 1. Consider of it fixedly and solemnly. 2. With application to yourselves. 3. And practically that you may set yourselves to strive for heaven. 4. Divinely, as in the sight of heaven. For remember, heaven is not plerished but with chosen people (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). Hell receives all comers, but not so heaven. None can come there but sealed ones, such as God has marked for Himself (2 Tim. ii. 19). And separated ones from the sinful world (1 Cor. vi. 11; Matt. xxv. 32). As your life is here, so will it be there. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. *He that walketh uprightly.*—*The model church member:*—The visible Zion was typical of the Invisible Church. In the "holy hill" God dwelt in symbol, in the Universal Church He dwells in viewless spiritual realness. Spiritual citizenship is the common privilege and honour of all who in moral character are abreast of the standard fixed in this Psalm. Who is a Christian, or a worthy member of Christ's Church, is here perfectly outlined by the infallible pen of inspiration.

I. WHAT HE IS, IN WORD, DEED, LIFE. He only abides in God's tabernacle who abides in God, and God in him. 1. His walk is in uprightness. This implies spiritual life, exercise, health, progress. 2. His work is in righteousness. This implies activity, beneficent activity, the holiest activity; righteous in its motive, method, and results. 3. His words in truth and love: this implies conversation and testimony. Invisible truth shrines itself in holy words, holy works, a holy walk. Being upright, the Christian cannot be crooked; being righteous, he cannot be a hypocrite; being truthful in his heart, he cannot be false in his conversation and deportment. II. WHAT HE IS NOT (vers. 3, 5). 1. No backbiter. 2. No evil-doer. 3. No receiver of slander. Were there no ears to receive scandal there would soon be no tongues to speak it. The receiver of such pernicious goods is as vile as the trader in them. 4. No usurer. 5. No patron of bribery. He daily endeavours to maintain a pure hand, a pure purse, a pure ear, a pure heart, and a pure tongue. He will condemn evil wherever found; honour holiness however manifest; swerve not from his word when given, though to personal injury, and be permanently steadfast in his work of faith and life of love. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *Life a walk:*—Now, if we be travellers or way-faring men we are to be careful of three things.



1. That we go in the right way ; for if we go out of our way, the farther we go the farther we shall be from our journey's end. This way is the true religion of Christ, which in the Scriptures is called the way, the way of life, the way of peace. 2. The next thing whereof we must be careful is, that being set in the right way we go forward therein, proceeding from faith to faith, and from a less measure of grace unto a greater. For neither must we stand still in this way, neither must we go back ; for if we do so, how shall we come to our journey's end ? We must take heed therefore lest we be non-proficients, and let us fear lest when we cease to be better we begin to be worse. 3. The third thing is, that we be upright in the way, neither treading awry by secret dissembling, nor halting downright betwixt God and Mammon. (*G. Downname.*) *The God-approved man* :—The man with whom God will hold communion is described. I. AS TO WHAT HE IS. 1. He is a man of whole heart and life ; who does the will of God, and speaks the truth because he loves it : it dwells in his heart, and he speaks it there first, before he speaks it with his tongue. Luther says, "It is a beautiful order. First, the person must be acceptable by cleanness (alluding to the Vulgate translation,—*qui ingreditur sine macula*) ; then the work by righteousness ; then the word by truth. So God has regard to Abel (himself) first, and then to his gifts." 2. He is not one who injures others, either by word or by deed or by listening and propagating slander. This is the meaning of the last clause. It may be rendered either : "hath not received (*i.e.* from others) a reproach," &c., or, "hath not taken up," *i.e.* has not stooped so as to pick up dirt out of the dunghill, that he may cast it at his neighbour ; or, "hath not lifted up," *i.e.* so as to place it like a burden upon his neighbour. II. AS TO WHAT HE IS NOT.

1. He is one who turns away from the evil and honours the good, who regards as inviolable the sanctity of an oath (not a casuist who sets himself a pretext for breaking his word when it is inconvenient to keep it). 2. He is not one who loves usury or takes bribes. The taking of usury is strictly forbidden in the law, and denounced by the prophets. Kimchi's casuistic distinction, that it is lawful for the Jew to take usury of strangers, but not of his own people, is very significant ; and, like too many Christian as well as Jewish interpretations of Scripture, framed to support a convenient and profitable practice. Thus in heart, in tongue, in actions, in conduct, as a member of society, he is alike free from reproach. Such is the figure of stainless honour drawn by the pen of a Jewish poet. Christian chivalry has not dreamed of a brighter. We have need often and seriously to ponder it. For it shows us that faith in God, and spotless integrity, may not be sundered ; that religion does not veil or excuse petty dishonesties ; that love to God is only then worthy the name when it is the life and bond of every social virtue. Each line is, as it were, a touchstone to which we should bring ourselves. To speak truth in the heart—to take up no reproach against a neighbour—would not the Christian man be perfect (*teleios*) of whom this could be said ? And that other trait in this Divine character, "who honoureth them that fear the Lord,"—is there a surer test of our spiritual condition than this, that we love and honour men because they love Christ ? (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*) *Uprightness of character* :—"He that walketh uprightly." Let us mark the strong, masculine beginning of this description of the man who is privileged to be familiar with the Lord. He is "upright" ! He is characterised by backbone. There is nothing crooked, wriggling, or soft about his temperament. There is a certain straightness and rigidity which, in all his relationships, is never absent. And mark where this fine masculinity begins. He "walketh" uprightly ! The word is descriptive of the movements or motions of life. Now our motions are determined by our motives. Our motives are our motors. To understand, therefore, the inner content of the Psalmist's words, we must get away into the inward parts, into the secret places of the life. Our motives must be strong and upright. There must be nothing limp and compromising about them. "Strength and beauty" must be in our sanctuary. (*J. H. Jovett, M.A.*) *The citizen of Zion an upright walker* :—I. UNFOLD THIS CHARACTER OF WALKING UPRIGHTLY. 1. It is union in the frame and disposition of his heart (*Psa. cxxv. 4*). There cannot be uprightness of life without uprightness of heart. If the cripple is made to go straight his legs must have a new set (*Psa. lxxviii. 37*). 2. He walks entirely in the interests of religion (*Gen. xvii. 1*). 3. He walks uniformly, his religion is of a piece (*Col. iv. 12*). As John the Baptist (*Luke vii. 24*). 4. He walks in the way of all known duty, as thus told in *Luke i. 6*. And as David (*Acts xiii. 22*). Hence he will be free from gross pollution of the outward man (*Psa. cxix. 1*). The upright want not their spots, sins of daily infirmity,—but they will not wallow in the mire. Nor will he allow himself in any known sin, seen or unseen of man.

5. He walks as under the eye of God (Psa. xvi. 8). 6. And singly (2 Cor. i. 12). As opposed to the "double-minded man." And to the deceitful (Col. iii. 22). And the selfish (Eph. vi. 5). 7. And he walks constantly in uprightness (John viii. 31). He perseveres in the Lord's ways. II. THOSE WHO SO WALK SHALL DWELL IN HEAVEN. For—1. Heaven is the land of uprightness (Psa. cxliii. 10, cxl., ult.). 2. The new birth which is from heaven makes them meet for heaven. 3. An upright walk is the saint's walk, in which they make forward to the kingdom (1 Kings iii. 6). The contrary way is the way of the wicked (Prov. ii. 15). 4. The Lord hath in His Word determined this (Prov. xxviii. 18). III. APPLICATION. This truth shows that there are few of this generation that will dwell in heaven if they turn not over a new leaf. For men do cling to some beloved lust or other, so that neither the word, nor conscience, nor providence can make them part with it. And they care far more for the eye of man than for the eye of God; and are impatient of reproof. Contrary to Psa. cxli. 5. And they labour not to approve themselves to God in their dealings; but are altogether selfish, considering nothing but their own profit. (T. Boston, D.D.) *The marks of the saints:*—"Thamim" therefore we may rightly interpret upright, that is, void of dissimulation; and it may be two ways considered: (1) as referred to God, and so it signifieth sincere, or void of hypocrisy; (2) as referred towards men, and so it signifieth simple or void of guile. So that he in this place is said to be upright who is void of hypocrisy towards God, and free from guile towards men. And first we are to speak of uprightness in respect of God, in handling whereof I purpose to observe this order. First, to show what it is. Secondly, that it is, as here it is made, a note proper to the children of God. And thirdly, because we are not to be idle hearers of this discourse, we are to try and examine ourselves whether this note agreeth unto us or not. And fourthly, if we do find our defectiveness therein, either in whole or in part, we are by certain forcible arguments to be stirred up to embrace it. And lastly, we are to show the means whereby to obtain it. (G. Downname.) *What uprightness is:*—I. TOWARDS GOD. 1. For first, to be upright, it is to walk with God, or before God (as the Lord saith to Abraham, walk before Me and be upright, Gen. xvii. 1), that is, so to lead our lives as in the sight and presence of God, who seeth the hearts and searcheth the reins of men. 2. Again, to be upright is to walk with a right foot, neither covertly treading awry with Peter (Gal. ii.), nor openly halting with the Israelites (1 Kings xviii. 21). 3. It is also to be void of hypocrisy and doubling, not to have an heart and an heart, or to be double minded, but to be single hearted. 4. Lastly, this virtue of uprightness is commended unto us under other names, namely, sincerity and truth, sincerity being opposed to mixture, and truth to falsehood, both which hypocrisy is. II. NOW THAT UPRIGHTNESS IS A PROPER NOTE TO THE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, it may easily appear by the reciprocal conversion which is betwixt them. For if all the citizens of heaven be upright, and all that be upright are citizens of heaven, then is it manifest that uprightness agreeth to all that be the sons and heirs of God, and to them alone. III. IT BEHOVETH US DILIGENTLY TO TRY AND EXAMINE OURSELVES, WHETHER THIS NOTE DOTH BELONG UNTO US OR NOT. For unless we be upright we shall not rest in God's holy mountain, but must look to have our portion with hypocrites. 1. And first, the study and endeavour of the upright is to approve himself to God. 2. It is the property of upright men to yield simple and absolute obedience to the Word of God, denying themselves, their own affections and reason. 3. A third sign of an upright man is, so to condemn the world, and to be weaned from worldly desire, as that he preferreth the keeping of a good conscience. 4. The property of an upright man is to hate sin as well in himself as in others, and to be exercised in judging himself. 5. The upright man repenteth of all sin, having an unfeigned purpose and resolution to abstain from all sin, and not to retain any one, howsoever besides and contrary to his purpose he may fail in some particulars. But the hypocrite, howsoever he may be brought to abstain from diverse sins whereunto he is not so much addicted, yet he will be sure to cherish and retain some sin or sins that are more dear unto him. 6. It is the property of the upright to love and reverence the good and godly for their godliness sake, and to condemn and despise the wicked, though mighty in the world, because of their wickedness. 7. It is the property of the upright to prefer the greater and weightier duties before the less, the substance before circumstances, the works either of piety or mercy before ceremonies. 8. Another note of an upright man is humility. As contrariwise, pride is the companion of hypocrisy. 9. Again, the upright man, being imbued with a good conscience, is confident in good causes and courageous in time of peril; as Solomon saith, "He that walketh

uprightly walketh boldly" (Prov. x. 9, xxviii. 1). And again, "The righteous are bold as a lion." 10. It is the privilege of an upright man to be constant in good things and to persevere to the end, keeping also a continued course of piety; for the upright man is he which hath built upon the rock, and therefore cannot utterly be overthrown by any blasts or tempests of temptations. IV. TO CONSIDER BY WHAT ARGUMENT WE MAY BE STIRRED UP TO EMBRACE THIS VIRTUE IF WE WANT IT, OR TO CONTINUE AND INCREASE THEREIN IF WE HAVE IT. The argument may be reduced to three heads, the excellency, the profit, the necessity of uprightness. But if neither the golden reason of excellency can move us, nor the silver reason of profit allure us, then must the iron reason of necessity enforce us to integrity and uprightness of heart. For first, such is the necessity thereof, that without integrity the best graces we seem to have are counterfeit, and therefore but glorious sins, the best worship we can perform is but hypocrisy, and therefore abominable in God's sight. For uprightness is the soundness of all grace and virtues, as also of all religion and worship of God, without which they are unsound and nothing worth. Wherefore in the Scriptures it is required that our faith should be unfeigned, that is, such a faith as inwardly purifieth the heart, and outwardly worketh by love; otherwise it is not a true and a lively, but a counterfeit and dead faith. Likewise our love must be unfeigned, that is, as John saith, we must not love in speech and tongue, but in deed and truth; or as Paul speaketh, our love must proceed from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. Our wisdom also must be without dissimulation. Lastly, our repentance and conversion unto God must be unfeigned and from our whole heart. As of prayer: to the acceptable performance whereof there is required uprightness, not only in the action itself, but also in the life of him that prayeth. V. LET US OBSERVE THESE FEW RULES. 1. Let us, according to the example of David, learn to set God always before our eyes, and ourselves in the sight and presence of God. And to this end let us meditate on His omnipresence and omniscience. 2. To meditation on His omnipresence and omniscience, let us add the consideration of His omnissufficiency, remembering, as the prophet Hanani said to Asa, that the eyes of the Lord behold all the earth, to show Himself strong with them that are of an upright heart towards Him. 3. Thirdly, to the former let us join a serious meditation of the just judgment. Hitherto we have spoken of integrity, as it is referred unto God; it followeth now that we should entreat thereof as it hath reference unto men. For as we must walk before God in truth and sincerity without hypocrisy, so must we have our conversation among men in simplicity and singleness of heart, without dissembling or guile. To conclude, therefore, this first note: seeing uprightness is made a proper mark of the true child of God and citizen of heaven, whereas contrariwise dissimulation and deceit are the brands of the wicked: it behoveth every one to apply this note to himself. Dost thou walk uprightly without hypocrisy towards God, without guile towards man? happy and blessed art thou, for thou shalt see God, and as thou art now a sound member of the Church militant, so shalt thou be an inheritor of glory in the triumphant. Dost thou not walk in sincerity towards God, and simplicity towards men, but in hypocrisy and dissimulation? then most fearful is thine estate, unless thou repent, for thou hast no part or fellowship in the doctrine of salvation, or in the communion of saints, but thy portion shall be assigned thee with hypocrites, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (*G. Downname.*) *The marks of the saints:*—1. The first virtue and mark to know the true saints of God is innocency of life. By "walking," in Holy Scripture, conversation and living is usually understood. Men call them innocent whose life is hurtless and harmless, neither stained nor defiled with iniquity or gross sins. The honest conversation of the saints, confirmed with undoubted testimony of a good conscience, is the harmless, hurtless, simple, innocent, and upright life, in this place required. In which virtue excelled Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, and the prophets, Paul, Peter, and the Apostles. Righteousness, doing good, and performing of Christian duties to all men is often in Holy Scripture commended unto the saints and lively members of God's Church, and the doctrine thereof is large and ample in the Sacred Word. 2. The second thing wherein the people's duty consisteth is to give the labourer his wages, the workman his hire. There is righteousness of parents, of children, of servants, of the hirer and the hired. 3. The third virtue in God's saints is truth in tongue and talk. The tongue is a necessary instrument in our common life. Truth is required both in our private and in our public life. To this there are sundry motives and things to stir us. The commandment of Almighty God. The



example of Jesus Christ. The Gospel which we profess is truth, and the word of truth. We are inspired with the Holy Spirit of God, whose temples we are. The Spirit is called the Spirit of truth, who "leadeth into all truth." To speak the truth from the heart is a mark of them which shall dwell in God's tabernacle. Doctrines: 1. Hypocrites, by their external life, are easily desecrated. 2. Religion and faith are showed by works of the second table. 3. Sacrifices without works of mercy are rejected. 4. We need not divide ourselves from the Church because there are some hypocrites in it. 5. There is no sound rest in the Church for any but those who desire to live honestly. (*R. Turnbull.*) *Practical piety*:—St. Anthony, the first hermit, lived a hard and strait life in the wilderness, praying constantly and meditating on the things of God. There is a story that a voice came to him from heaven, saying, "Anthony, thou art not so perfect as is a cobbler who dwells at Alexandria." Anthony, hearing this, rose up forthwith and took his staff, and went on his journey till he came to Alexandria, where he found the cobbler. The cobbler was astonished to see so great a saint come to his house. Then Anthony said to him, "Come, tell me thy whole manner of life, and how thou spendest thy time." "Sir," said the cobbler, "talents I have few, and good works have I none, for my life is but simple, for I am but a poor cobbler. In the morning, when I rise, I pray for the whole city wherein I dwell, especially for all such neighbours and poor friends as I have; after that I set to my work, in which I spend the whole day to get my living; and I keep from all falsehood, for I hate all manner of deceit; wherefore, when I make any man a promise I keep it and perform it truly. In the evening I teach and instruct my children, as far as my knowledge serves me, to fear God and do His will. And this is the sum of my simple life." In this story we see how God loves those that follow their calling and use His gifts as best they can. *Allied virtues*:—The virtues all lock into each other. They cannot stand alone. Like the stones of an arch, no one of them can be wanting without making all the rest insecure. That character alone is trustworthy in which each virtue takes its relative position, and all are held in place and confirmed by the keystone of a living faith in the great central fact, that there is a God of infinite goodness and truth, whose commandments are the law of life in this world and in the world to come. *Worketh righteousness*.—*A mark of Zion citizenship*:—The favoured citizen is a man who is industrious in goodness. Righteousness is not to him a mere department of moral philosophy upon which he has to speculate or theorise, nor is it satisfied with the delineations wrought out in language by heroic poets; it is a condition of spirit and heart before God admitting of culture within and sanctified expression without. The good man may be described as building a life-temple of righteousness; he is continually looking around for material which he can put into his building, and his satisfaction is in proportion to the largeness and beauty of the edifice. Those who are addicted to iniquity are described as "workers"; they are not ashamed of their wicked profession, nor is their service marked by self-indulged lethargy. The sojourner in the holy city is not only to do a better work, he is to do it with more serious determination and industry. He is not to be silent in the presence of unrighteousness, but is at all costs to speak out in favour of true justice and virtue. In his circle he is to be known as a man who will spare no effort to advance righteousness, whether found in the claims of an individual, the necessities of an institution, or the policy of a nation. Suspect any form of so-called righteousness that can be silent in the presence of oppression, and that can let wickedness pass by without indignant repudiation. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Righteousness in character*:—"And worketh righteousness." There is not only backbone but energy. And the energy is of a special and peculiar kind. It maketh ever for righteousness. It is not only that the issues of life are just and equitable; the equity is found in their very birth. The word "worketh" might be equally well translated "ordaineth." The friend of God inspects the wishes and purposes and ambitions which appear in his life. He marks their tendency and their aim. Some of these wishes and ambitions he suppresses and rejects; others he selects and welcomes. He discriminates among his allurements. He "ordains" the purposes that make for righteousness, and labours for their judgment. So that the companion of God is holding in his secret place a perpetual ordination service. The righteous suggestion and aspiration are being continually approved and ordained to the ministry of actual life and service. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The transcendent importance of social morality*:—It is time to preach the doctrine of this Psalm—that there is no true religion apart from social morality. I. AN ABIDING FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO THE HAPPINESS OF MAN. The idea in ver. 1 is, "Who

shall have permanent friendship with Thee?" This is the cardinal want of humanity. That an abiding friendship with God is essential to man's happiness may be argued from two things. 1. From what is in the human soul. There is a trusting tendency, an infinite craving, a sense of guilt. 2. From what is in the Divine Word. Nothing is more clearly taught in the New Testament than this.

**II. SOCIAL MORALITY IS ESSENTIAL TO AN ABIDING FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.** Look at social morality in two aspects. 1. As described. (1) Honest, (2) truthful, (3) unmalicious, (4) character-regarding, (5) rigorous fidelity, (6) unextortionate, (7) incorruptibly just. 2. As necessary. Our conduct towards man determines our relation to God, and our destiny too. True social morality always implies true love to God. It is the practical expression of true religion. Then true social morality is the best means of promoting genuine Christianity. That man does most to spread the religion of Jesus who, in all his connections with his fellow-men, does the just and the generous, the merciful and the Christ-like. (*Homilist.*) *The citizen of Zion a worker of righteousness.*—It is he that worketh righteousness now shall dwell in heaven. **I. UNFOLD THE CHARACTER.** 1. He is a believer in Christ, and righteous by faith. He that does not work faith works no righteousness at all (John vi. 29). For a man must first be righteous before he can work it. A soul not united to Christ cannot do this (John xv. 5). All life and strength spiritual is in Christ (1 John v. 11, 12). Until the conscience be purged from dead works he cannot work righteousness (Heb. ix. 14). Truth is the spring of all good works (1 Tim. i. 5; 1 John iii. 12; Heb. xi. 4). Therefore, let men work as they will, until they be true believers in Christ they cannot work righteousness. Works without faith ruin the soul. See the Pharisee (Luke xviii. 11, 12). But the citizen of Zion is a believer. Also faith without works ruins a man, for it is but a dead faith (James ii. 14, 15). 2. He worketh righteousness towards God. He seeks to give God His due (Matt. xxii. 21; Isa. lxiv. 5; Acts x. 35). 3. He worketh righteousness towards man. He will wrong no man. He will be blameless and harmless (Phil. ii. 15). He seeks to do as he would be done to (Matt. vii. 12). And makes conscience of giving every one their due (Rom. xiii. 7). Not that they are perfect. Good Asa was not (2 Chron. xvi. 10, and Gen. xx. 9). But their sins are not deliberate and of set purpose. He is a sincere worker of righteousness towards man. Hence in his particular relations, in the special duties of such relation as husband, wife, parent, master, &c. In a word, he is conscientiously righteous in all things that concern his neighbour (Mic. vi. 3).

**II. CONFIRM THIS DOCTRINE.** Consider—1. God is a righteous God. 2. It is the great end of redemption that Christ's people may be righteous (Luke i. 74, 75). 3. And judgment will be according to works. Then be workers of righteousness. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *And speaketh the truth in his heart.*—*The citizen of Zion a speaker of truth in his heart.*—This is the third character of the citizen of Zion. Not only does he speak truth, but he speaks it in his heart; that is, his thoughts and reasonings are consistent with truth. The doctrines that are deducible from the text are, that those that shall be inhabitants of heaven speak the truth here, and that they speak it in their hearts as well as to others. As to the first of these. **I. EXPLAIN THE CHARACTER OR PART OF THE CHARACTER OF A CITIZEN OF ZION.** Therefore inquire—1. What is truth? Pilate asked this question, but stayed not for the answer. Truth is a sacred harmony or agreement of things. Anatomists have observed that the tongue in man is tied with a double string to the heart. And so in truth spoken there is necessary a double agreement of our words with our hearts—that we say what we think; and with the thing itself, that it be as you say. 2. What is it to be a speaker of truth? He makes conscience to speak out the truth seasonably (John xviii. 37). We are to remember (Eccles. iii. 7, and Prov. xxix. 11). This was Doeg's sin (Psa. lii.). Those whose tongues are like a loose window in wind, ever clattering, have little wit or grace. Talkativeness is both a sign of little awe of God and is the badge of a fool (Eccles. v. 3; Prov. xiv. 33). But the citizen of Zion speaks the truth seasonably, that is, when called of God to speak it. This call may be private and providential, or public and authoritative, as in the courts of justice. When thus called he will speak fully, freely, clearly, and sincerely (2 Chron. xix. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 17). 3. And of speaking nothing but the truth (Isa. lxiii. 8; 2 Cor. xiii. 8). We are never to lie (Job xiii. 7, 8). Let us heed this both in speaking to God (Psa. lxxviii. 36) and to men (Eph. iv. 25).

**II. CONFIRM THE DOCTRINE.** It is evident, for—1. In the saints the image of Satan is defaced (Rev. xxi., ult.). But 2. The image of God is repaired in them, and truth is a shining lineament in it (Eph. iv. 24; Tit. i. 2; Numb. xxiii. 19). And 3. The Christian life is a walking in truth

(3 John 3). There is truth of heart in true Christians, and that makes truth of conversation. 4. And the Lord has expressly declared that liars shall inhabit hell, not heaven, for God is the God of truth. III. APPLICATION. 1. This doctrine writes death on the faces of two sorts of people—those who are concealers of the truth which God calls them to speak out, and all liars. This sin is a common vice ; but it is the black brand of one who shall never see heaven. They are barred out of heaven thereby, whether they be jesting liars, who lie to make others merry (Hos. vii. 3 ; Prov. xxvi. 18, 19), or officious liars, who will lie to do themselves or others a good turn. Or pernicious liars, whose motive is mischief (Prov. vi. 17). Or covetous liars, who lie to get gain (Prov. xx. 14). Or proud, boasting liars, who lie to raise others' esteem of them (Prov. xxv. 14). Or flattering liars, who lie to curry favour with those they flatter (Psa. xii. 2, 3 ; Prov. xxvi. 28, xxix. 5). Or fearful liars, who, for fear of others, make lies their refuge, as children often do (Psa. lviii. 3) ; and others, too, who are but children in courage (Prov. xxix. 25 ; Rev. xxi. 8). Or talkative liars (Prov. x. 19). Those who are given to much talking will hardly be found regardful of truth. Or rash liars, who lie through inadvertency and customary looseness as to their words (2 Sam. xiii. 30). Much sin is contracted this way. 2. Speak the truth and keep from lying, for God is the God of truth (Deut. xxxii. 4 ; Tit. i. 2), but the devil is the author and father of lies (John viii. 44). He ruined the world at first with a lie (Gen. iii. 4, 5). Lying, too, is the bane of human society, and a mean, base, and contemptible thing, the native product of the corruption of nature, the spawn of the old serpent left in men's hearts (Psa. lviii. 3), and is an abomination to God (Prov. vi. 17–19, xii. 22), and will ruin your souls for evermore. Check it in the young, as ye love their souls. (*Ibid.*) *On truth* :—David begins this short but beautiful Psalm with a warmth of devotion peculiar to himself. Among other essential requisites that entitle a human being to the distinguished honour of dwelling on the Lord's holy hill, truth and sincerity are particularly noticed. Some of the obligations that the religion of Christ inculcates are limited by circumstances and will admit of being modified by different causes. But the great virtue of truth is necessary at all times, and binding under all the relations of life. It is never a mere ornament of the mind, or a virtue of the middle order whose absence may be excused. It is absolutely necessary to all virtue ; it is the broad basis on which they all rest. I would, then, impress upon you its sacred obligations and guard you against the shame, the guilt, and degradation of falsehood. There is nothing which is a greater recommendation of character. It at all times inspires confidence and ensures respect. It is a proof of innocence and fortitude combined. As charity is said "to cover a multitude of sins," so an inviolable habit of truth will atone for many imperfections. But its loveliness is never more conspicuous than when contrasted with falsehood. There is nothing that men more complain of than of being mistaken. Treachery and hypocrisy are by no means unusual ; but duplicity, equivocation, and behaviour that has a tendency to deceive are amongst the commonest breaches of truth, and are the causes that daily increase the mortifications and disappointments of the young, while they confirm the selfishness and suspicion of the aged. The violator of truth, therefore, is the great corrupter of the world. Those whom nature intended to be open, confidential, and affectionate, freeze into misanthropy, or else become uncandid, suspicious, and deceitful. But the liar is soon caught in his own snares. He will not be believed even when he speaks the truth, and gains no credit even when he deserves it. Whatever other good qualities he may have, the vice of falsehood poisons the whole. He can do no good to others, for no one will confide in him. If we inquire why men violate truth, we shall find that their motives are often vanity, or fear and imbecility. Some are so greedy of a name that they care not how they violate truth if they can gain belief. Who will deny that the vanity of giving men information has often polluted the pages of history, degraded philosophy almost to imposture, and inspired even sceptics with something more than the credulity of ignorance ? But truth is yet more violated from fear and imbecility. Where this is so our pity and indulgence are appealed to. Children are often led to transgress truth for the sake of some trifling gratification before they can be aware of the depravity of falsehood. They think it the nearest way to enjoyment, and an easy and effectual method to escape detection. It is difficult to correct this when it proceeds from fear, for it often requires much fortitude to speak the truth. Men feel this ; how much more children. They should be taught in their earliest years that there is no fault so great as falsehood. Needless severity or a capricious kind of alternating tyranny and indulgence terribly foster this vice. And nothing but



religion will help us herein. God is the God of truth. His works and His Word alike declare that "God is truth." (*J. Hewlett, B.D.*) *Truth in the heart*:—"And speaketh the truth in his heart." When a man speaks the truth to himself he will speak it to his neighbour. The beginning of all sincerity is to be sincere in one's self-communings. No man will be guilty of equivocation who does not first deceive himself. The companion of God is absolutely frank and candid with himself. In his heart is to be found the fair angel of truth, and he does not defile her garments by any ill doctrine of reserve or self-evasion. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *Speech spoilt by the underlying evil of a corrupt heart*:—A lady who had lost a little daughter took a photograph and painted it with rare skill and laid it in a drawer, and was grieved to find that soon afterwards it was covered with ugly blotches. She painted it again, and it was again marred. There was something wrong with the paper, some chemical ingredients in undue proportions. No matter how beautiful the picture made on its surface, up ever out of the heart of the paper would come the ooze of decay. So with human life, the heart being wrong spoils all. (*J. R. Miller.*)

**Ver. 3. He that backbiteth not with his tongue.**—*How may detraction be best prevented or cured?*—The abuses of the tongue are many, one whereof is the malignity of it. A man can scarce come into any company but his ears shall be filled with censures, detractions, reproaches; party against party, person against person. Doctrine: It is the duty, and must be the care, of every true Christian not to take up a reproach against his neighbour. I. EXPLAIN THE POINT. 1. Who is my neighbour? It is the peculiarity of the Gospel that every man is made my neighbour. Augustine says, "Every man is a neighbour to any other man." Kimchi says, "He is called my neighbour with whom I have any business." 2. What is a reproach? (1) It is nothing else but an evil report, or an evil speech, unduly uttered concerning another. A report is evil in two ways—when it is evil in itself, a false report, and when it is evil to a man's neighbour, when your speech tends to your neighbour's disparagement and defamation. (2) When a man publisheth a neighbour's secret infirmities or sins. (3) When a man aggravates the real or supposed faults of his neighbour either in opinion or practice. Men often censure others for things indifferent and of small moment, as, for example, in their habits and garbs. 3. What is it to take up a reproach against a man's neighbour? It is a defective manner of expression, and therefore is diversely supplied, but especially and most reasonably two ways—when he takes it up into his mouth, and is the first raiser of the reproach, or the spreader and promoter of it; and when he takes it into his ear. This he may do when he quietly permits it, and gives no check to it; when he hears a reproach greedily, and with delight; and when he easily believes a reproach. II. THE PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE. This shall consist in the representation of the sinfulness and injury of this practice of censuring, backbiting, and reproaching of others. 1. It is injurious to God. As an invasion of God's prerogative; a manifest breach of His laws. It is against particular and express Scriptures; against the fundamental law of love and charity; against the "royal law" of Christ; against the great law of maintaining peace among men; against the great command laid upon all Christians, of excelling other men: it is a sin against the whole design and scope of the Scriptures; it is a great injury to God, because it is a confederacy with God's greatest enemy, the devil. 2. It is an injury done to thyself. Hereby thou dost contract guilt, the worst of all evils. Hereby thou dost expel or weaken that excellent grace of love, that necessary and fundamental grace, that sweet and amiable grace. Hereby thou dost lay a foundation for thy own reproach. 3. It is a great injury to the person whom thou dost censure and reproach. Thou dost rob him of the best treasure he hath in the world. Hereby thou dost disenable him from getting good, both as to his outward and as to his inward man. Hereby thou dost hinder him from doing of good in the world. 4. It is a great injury to other men. Thou corruptest others by thy example. Thou art a disturber of human society. Thou art a great enemy to the Church of God. Two questions—1. May I not speak evil of another person when it is true? A man may be faulty in so doing. A man may speak evil of another person when necessity requires it. If you will speak evil of others, do it in the right method. In doubtful cases silence is the safest way. 2. If the man I speak against is an enemy of God and His people? Well to remember there is much sinful zeal in the world and in the Church. Consider how easy a mistake is in this case, and how dangerous. And you must not go out of your way to meet with God's enemies. Application: 1. Lamentation for the

gross neglect of this duty, or the frequent commission of this sin. 2. Take heed that you be not found guilty of this sin. 3. Avoid the causes of this sin. Take heed of uncharitableness, in all its kinds and degrees. Take heed of loquacity and multitude of words. Take heed of pragmatism, which is when men are inquisitive and busy about other men's matters. Take heed of man-pleasing. 4. Learn the government of your tongues. (*Matthew Poole, A.M.*)

*The good man no backbiter*:—"He that backbiteth not with his tongue." That is an extraordinary expression! To bite with the tongue! But the word is even more expressive still. The backbiter is one who walks along the way for the purpose of spying out another's defects. He then takes the products of his ugly search and presses them into his social intercourse, and endows his words with teeth that are coated with venom. The companion of the Lord paces the common way with quite a different purpose. He, too, spies about, but not with the eyes of the cynic, but with the eyes of a friend, and "his words are a fountain of life." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

*Venomous speech*:—We saw in the museum at Venice an instrument with which one of the old Italian tyrants was accustomed to shoot poisoned needles at the objects of his wanton malignity; we thought of gossips, backbiters, and secret slanderers, and wished that their mischievous devices might come to a speedy end. Their weapons of innuendo, shrug, and whisper appear to be as insignificant as needles, but the venom which they instil is deadly to many a reputation. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*Slander avoided*:—1. Slander. All reproachful, opprobrious, and vile speech of or to our brethren is condemned; and that speech which, uttered in their absence, tendeth to their disgrace, discredit, or defamation. This evil is against the law of charity. Satan is the author of slander. See his words to Eve. St. James, speaking of slander, said the tongue was full of deadly poison. This sin is in sundry ways committed. Diogenes, being asked, what beast bit sorest, answered,

"Among wild beasts, the slanderer; but among tame beasts, the flatterer. (1) When anything is falsely said of us, and we are charged with matters that are untrue. (2) When men, by vehemency of words, aggravate and amplify the infirmities and light offences of men. (3) When men blaze abroad the secret sins and infirmities of their brethren. (4) When we deprave the good deeds and well-doing of men. (5) When, by our manner of speaking, we leave a surmise and suspicion in the hearts of the hearers. (6) When we report truly the faults of men, yet not for love to the truth, but for envy to the persons. The chief causes of slander seem to be these: Love of yourselves. Malice towards others. Desire of revenge. Hope of commodity. Study to please. 2. Injury. Men do injury and evil unto other men chiefly in four ways: in body, in goods, in rights and privileges, in name and estimation. 3. Receiving and believing false reports against brethren. Men should not be too light of belief. They are often even pleased with false reports. 4. Flattering the wicked. To hate the wicked and favour the just is a point of equity. 5. Breaking promises. This is usual in the wicked. (*R. Turnbull.*)

*The backbiter*:—The backbiter is so called because, like the dog, he steals behind those in whom he wishes to flesh his teeth, deals in innuendoes, insinuations, evil surmisings, significant shrugs and looks, words meaning one thing in their literal sense and altogether another thing from the tone in which they are uttered, and so destroys a good name that no open assault could have affected. In this way the weak often overwhelm the strong; the vilest the most pure. The blow from behind and in the dark accomplishes its work of ruin before danger is even suspected. The truly good man, however, will assail no man's good name. If he cannot speak good of another he will say nothing. He thinks, and justly too, that he has no more right to injure another's character, than he has to injure his health; to destroy another's good name, than he has to destroy his life. If he discover a neighbour's faults he does not noise them abroad, but tries to conceal them; and so, if he discovers his neighbour's necessities, he does what he can to relieve them. Moreover, he taketh not "up a reproach against his neighbour"; that is, either he will not originate a reproach, or he will not listen to one. The willing listener is as bad as the tale-bearer. If there were none to listen to the tale of scandal, there would be none to start it, and none to repeat it; the slanderous ear is as detestable as the slanderous tongue. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

*Nor doeth evil to his neighbour*.—*The good man no evil-doer*:—"Nor doeth evil to his neighbour." I think we are still in the region of speech, and the Psalmist is still describing the influence of destructive conversation. To do evil in one's speech is to spoil one's neighbour; to break him to pieces. We have preserved the equivalent of the Psalmist's phrase down to our own time. We still speak of "picking a person to

pieces." This is precisely the significance of the original word. There is a conversation which mercilessly engages in the exercise of spoliation; breaking up the reputation of another, and leaving it like the bones of some poor bird which has been picked to pieces by a destructive hawk. The speech of the companion of the Lord is quite otherwise. It ever seeks to construct and strengthen. "Let no speech proceed out of your mouth but what is edifying." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

**Detraction:**—From the day that Adam fell, thorns and thistles, with other noxious plants, have sprung up to vex and molest the sinner. As travellers wending their way through some dismal swamp, let us pause a moment on the way and pull up one of these weeds and examine it for our instruction. We may have it in our own garden plot; who knows? The weed we speak of is—Detraction. I. IT IS ONE OF A CLASS OF SINS. There are many of them, such as slander, calumny, defamation, revilings, aspersions, vilifications, and libel. All these are worse in some respects than detraction; they are coarser, uglier, bigger weeds. Calumny involves deliberate false statement. The defamer publishes his unfriendly message to the world. The libeller writes down and prints, and so puts before the eyes of a thousand readers in lasting form, the expressions of his malignity. And they who revile and asperse give us the idea of common scolds and scatterers of mud and offal, and show meanly themselves for the very manner of their work. But the act of the detractor is different from all these. It needs not lies nor aught which is essential to the others.

II. WHAT, THEN, IS IT? It is a taking something away, a kind of petty minute robbery. It consists in depreciating and disparaging others. It is made up of slurs and innuendoes, of hints and gestures; and is often clad in graceful and witty garb. But it is very villainous. For with all our weakness and faults there is some good in everybody which is very precious to its possessor. Now the Lord sees this, however little it be, and makes the most of it. But detraction makes the least of it it can.

III. THE CAUSES OF THIS SIN. 1. Personal interest. People think there is something to be gained by it. 2. Envy. They cannot endure the prosperity or happiness of others. What evil it works in all public affairs. It is the crying scandal of our day. And in business, men use it to supplant their rivals and to advance themselves. The envious detractor is moved thereto by his bad temper and also by the pleasure, which he ought to be ashamed of,—the pleasure which people take in hearing of the misfortunes of others. Who is not conscious of this pleasure, vile as it is? But 3. Vanity is the chief motive of detraction. Reputation for wit is gained in such easy way by it, and a vain, weak person cannot resist the temptation. Nobody would listen to him on any other subject, but let him open his lips with some wretched gossip or scandal, and all listen. What punishment is too severe for this? It is the pest of society; but as for reform, it is all but impossible. Habit, and rivalry, and lack of high aim maintain it. But we have need greatly to fear if we be guilty of it. (*Morgan Dix.*)

**Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.**—*Evil speaking not to be listened to:*—"Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." Then we are not only forbidden to speak evil, we are forbidden to listen to it. We are not only forbidden to cast a slander, we are forbidden to take it up when another has hurled it. To repeat a thing is to incur guilt quite as much as if we originated it. I think that one of the great needs of our day is the grace of sanctified hearing. How much the Master made of the responsibility of possessing ears! "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "Take heed how ye hear." There is a discriminating way of listening. There is a listening which encourages the speaker of slander, and there is a closing of the ears which reduces the slanderer to silence. There would be much less evil speaking if there was much less evil listening. The evil speaker yearns for the reward of attention and applause. If these are withheld he will soon tire of his nefarious trade. The companion of the Lord listens for commendations, eulogies, and repeats them to others. He likes to hear a good thing of somebody, and he sings it again into the ears of somebody else. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

**The law of the lip:**—I. THE NATURE OF SLANDER. 1. The origination of an evil report concerning our neighbour. 2. The circulation of an evil report invented by others. 3. The listening to such a report. Giving it the sanction of our ear. II. THE EVIL OF SLANDER. What mighty unhappiness it causeth. 1. It demoralises the slanderer. 2. It demoralises the person to whom the slander is related. 3. It wrongs the party slandered. III. THE CURE FOR SLANDER. It is a most difficult thing to rule the tongue, and refrain from evil-speaking. What is the grand cure for all sins of the lip? He "speaketh the truth in his heart." The heart must be changed, enlightened, exalted. Out of a pure fountain flows a pure stream. (*W. L. Watkinson.*)



Ver. 4. **In whose eyes a vile person is contemned.**—*Sound moral appreciations*:—"In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." Then he is a man of sound moral appreciations. He does not pay respect where no respect is deserved. He does not withhold respect where it is merited. Says an old Puritan, "We must be as honest in paying respect as in paying our bills." But let us pay them in the right quarter. Do not let us call the vile person honourable because he is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fareth sumptuously every day. And do not let us esteem the honourable man as vile because his equipage is poor and his nobility is clothed in rags. Let us call villainy vile wherever we find it, and let us esteem nobility as noble in whatever guise it may appear. This is one of the great characteristics of the friend of God; to whom the sweet is sweet and the sour is sour; evil is evil and good is good. Nothing is allowed to interfere with the soundness and sobriety of his judgment, and no verbal jugglery is permitted to destroy the healthiness of his discriminating vocabulary. He knows the superlative, and loves it! "As for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all My delight." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The believer's regard for those who fear God*:—Mr. Fox being asked whether he remembered not such a poor servant of God who had received succour from him in time of trouble answered, "I remember him well; I tell you, I forget the lords and ladies to remember such." (*John Trapp.*) **He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.**—*The obligation of an oath*:—Among the duties mentioned in this Psalm we find this of constancy and faithfulness in keeping those promises which we have confirmed by an oath. Because the greatest temptation to the breaking of oaths proceeds from fear of some temporal damage, or prospect of some worldly advantage, therefore it is said, "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." I. **IN WHAT CASES AN OATH DOETH OBLIGE.** No oath can oblige to that which is impossible; or to that which is unlawful; for justice requires that we do not invade the rights and privileges of other men. Oaths contrary to charity or mercy or humanity are void. No oath can oblige when it hinders a greater good. What if the matter be purely indifferent? There can be here no occasion of difficulty, except the matter be also of no moment. He is undoubtedly guilty of great irreverence towards God, that will cite His name to a trifle. If the matter of the oath be such as causeth a man to doubt whether it be lawful or no, in that case he had better perform it. There are cases relating to the person that swears. Here, whensoever we shall determine that an oath doth not bind, it will be for the want of the person's rightly understanding that he made one. A man may not know what an oath is; or he may swear when affected by anger, or by drink, or by fear; or by any other passion; or if a man swears to save his life, as from robbers. II. **IN WHAT SENSE AN OATH OUGHT TO BE TAKEN.** That sense is to be taken which is most suitable to the business men are about. We may not precisely, without limitation, accept the sense of the swearer, or of the imposer, or that which the words of the oath will bear. The swearer may equivocate, or use mental reservations. What if a man swears and doth not intend to swear? Something of intention is always required to an oath. It would be a frivolous excuse for a man to say, he intended to swear, but did not intend to be obliged. III. **HOW GREAT THE OBLIGATION OF AN OATH IS.** It is a solemn invocation of God to witness what we say, by His favour and mercy to us, if it be true; or by His vengeance upon us if it be false. It is a high advantage and privilege which God vouchsafeth to us, in that He gives us leave, upon urgent and weighty causes, to make use of His glorious Name as a seal to confirm the truth of what we assent. If, therefore, we take it up to avouch a falsehood, we are exceedingly ungrateful, we falsify that seal, we profane that dreadful name, we apply that which is most sacred to the worst of uses. . . . For these and the like causes an oath hath generally been looked upon as a sufficient assurance and confirmation of the truth of any matter. He that seriously considers what an oath is cannot surely believe that any man is above the obligation of it. And as no man can be too great for such an obligation himself, so neither can he dispense with it in others. (*Henry Hellier, M.A.*) *Immutable in covenant*:—"He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Then he is immutable in covenant. His word is his bond. He is dependable. When he promises he redeems. And he does it even to his own hurt! If it necessitates bleeding, he still redeems it. He is "faithful even unto death." He is grandly consistent, consistent not in the sense of never changing his opinion, but in the grander sense of never altering his loyalty to truth and his relationship to God. His word is a tower in which the weak and defenceless have a strong defence. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. He that putteth not out his money to usury.—*Unclean money eschewed*.—"He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent." The companion of the Lord rejects the fruits of oppression. He will have no money that bears the marks of blood. Nothing unclean will he take into the building of his estate. In earning his bread he will never use a sting; in labouring he will never bite. He will never allow himself to gain an advantage by illegitimate means. He will accept no bribe, nor give any. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right." (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*) *The examination of usury*.—I. DEFINE WHAT USURY IS. It is that gain which is gotten by lending, covenanting before with the borrower to receive more than was borrowed. Some one, defining usury, calls it the contrary to charity; for "love seeketh not her own," but usury seeks another's that is not her own. Then it is far from love; but God is love; so usury is far from God. Usury has her name of biting (*neshet*), and she may well signify it; therefore St. Paul saith (Gal. v. 15), "If you bite one another, take heed," &c. II. ITS UNLAWFULNESS. 1. It is against the law of charity. 2. Against the law of nations. For all nations have laws against usury, and some restraints against it. 3. Against the law of nature, that is, against the natural compassion which should be among men. 4. Against the law of God (Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 37; Deut. xxiii. 19). It is a miserable occupation to live by sin, and a great comfort when a man can feel, of his gold and silver, that it is all well gotten, and that he leaves of his own to his children. The usurer loveth the borrower as the ivy loveth the oak, to grow up by it; the usurer would grow rich by the borrower. The ivy claspeth the oak like a lover, but it claspeth out all the juice and sap, that the oak cannot thrive after it. So the usurer claspeth the borrower with such bonds that he ever after grows poor as others grow rich. Christ bids us lend freely. God bade Adam live by the sweat of his brow (*face*), his own, not that of another, which usurers live by. David says, "A good man is merciful and lendeth," and then he adds, "he shall never be moved." In Exod. xxiii. it is said, "Lend unto him which wanteth without usury, that the Lord may bless thee." III. THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF USURY. There be more sorts of it than there are tricks at cards. 1. Some will not take usury, but will have the use of your land or your cattle, and so get even more than by usury. 2. Others will take plates, bedding, and other household stuff, to use or wear, (*Amos ii.*) "They lie down upon the clothes which are laid to pledge." 3. Others will take a pawn, which is better than the money they lend, and if the money be not returned by a certain day, they keep the pawn. 5. Others will buy goods at a small price, and then covenant that the borrowers buy them back at the same price on such a day, or else the goods will be theirs (1 Thess. iv. 6). IV. THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH USURY IS DEFENDED. There be three opinions. Some say, like God, "Thou shalt die." They think that usury is utterly unlawful, because God hath forbidden it. Some say, like the woman, "Peradventure thou shalt die"; they doubt whether usury be utterly unlawful or no, because it is so much tolerated. Some say like the serpent, "Thou shalt not die"; they think usury lawful, because it is gainful, as Saul thought that the idolaters' beasts should not be killed, because they were fat (1 Sam. xv. 9). The arguments for usury which are pleaded are—1. God doth allow some kind of usury (see Deut. xxiii.). "Of a stranger thou mayest take usury." But a stranger signifies an enemy such as they were commanded to destroy; only to such might they be usurers. But men take usury of their brother. 2. They say they lend for compassion. But how so when you partake not of your brother's losses but his gains? 3. They say, If he gain, and I gain too, is not this well? Should he not be thankful? Yes, if he hath received a good turn from you. But you bind him to requite it. 4. It is necessary for orphans, widows, and such like, which have no other way of getting their living. But how did the Jews do without it? If it was good for them not to have, is it good for us that we should have usurers? 5. They say, "If I may not gain by the money which I lend, I will keep it to myself." But you must not do that (Matt. v. 42; Ezek. xviii.). 6. It is only the biting usury which is forbidden. But all usury is that. 7. They allege the law of the land, which allows it. But if God's law forbid thee, can man's law excuse thee? It did not serve Adam to say, "The woman gave me." And furthermore, the law only restrains. No man is to take more than ten in the hundred; if he do he shall be punished. The law doth not sanction any usury, but only holds back the usurer. V. THE USURER'S PUNISHMENT. 1. Not only God's law, but the canon law doth condemn the usurer. It doth excommunicate him, as having no communion with saints. 2. It

doth detain him from the sacraments, as having no communion with Christ. 3. Will not suffer him to be buried, as if he were only worthy to lie in hell. 4. It treats his will as no will. But hear the judgment of God's law. The usurer doth receive two incomes, one of the borrower, and another of the revenger. The first is gain, the other punishment. All the Scripture prophesieth evil unto him. Solomon saith (Prov. xxviii. 8), "He which increaseth his riches by usury, gathereth for them which will be merciful to the poor." God saith that He will smite the usurer with His fist (Ezek. xxii. 13). As his hands were shut against the poor, so shall God's hands be against him. And here David saith, "they shall not dwell in God's temple, nor rest in His holy mountain." But this punishment is all punishments. Yes, usury signifieth biting, for when it has bitten others it shall bite the usurer too, and never cease. If, therefore, Christ be come to your hearts, as He came to Zacchæus' house, restore now, as he did, and escape this judgment. VI. THE GIVING OF USURY. Is this lawful? Jeremiah says he never gave nor took (xv. 10). But he meant he was no meddler with the world, whereby they should envy him as usurers were most of all envied. But many will borrow who will never lend; and it is said, if there were no borrowers there would be no lenders, if no bribe-givers there would be no bribe-takers. And there is as much difference between the two men as between covetousness and necessity, for he which borroweth upon usury borroweth for necessity. But for this God has allowed many things—Adam's sons to marry with Adam's daughters; and David to eat the shewbread (Luke vi. 4). And so when immediate help is needed to prevent a great mischief, many think that it is lawful to resort to the usurer. But if some may borrow upon usury it does not follow that all may. Yet many borrow who have no need. They borrow because they reckon that they can get more by the money than the money they pay for it. Hence it is that goods are so dear. And there are some who borrow because they want to make their creditors think they are bare of money. These are like foxes, and I doubt not there be more sorts than I know. VII. WHAT SHOULD THEY DO WHO HAVE GOT THEIR MONEY BY USURY? Restore it again. If you cannot say as Samuel said, "Whose goods have I taken?" then you must say as Zacchæus said, Whose goods have I kept? The best thing is to do no man wrong, the next best is to make amends. For as humility is the repentance of pride, and abstinence of surfeit, and alms of covetousness, and forgiveness of malice, so restitution is the repentance of usury. As a camel when he comes home casteth off his burden at the door, that he may enter into his stable; so they which are laden with other men's goods, when they go to heaven, must leave their burden where they had it, lest they be too gross to enter in at the narrow gate; therefore that you may not die in your sins, make restitution (2 Sam. ii. 26), so do you remember whether this course will be sweet or bitter in the end. Now, seeing that you may not be usurers to men, be usurers to God (Matt. xix. 29). (*H. Smith.*) *The sins of usury and bribe:*—By usury understand—that gain which, by composition, compact, and agreement going before, is taken for the duty of lending above the principal. It is nothing prejudicial to the dangerous adventures of lawful merchants; neither condemneth it tolerable gains in the retailer. But when, for very lending, without labour, without danger undertaken by transporting goods, or otherwise, there riseth commodity and gain, the principal returning, there is usury. Usury is against God's law. The Roman Commonwealth decayed after usury was therein entertained. Usury is condemned by the general consent of the Church and the Fathers. The wise men among the heathen condemned it. The usurer is an idolater, for he is covetous. The last forbidden evil is corruption and bribery. The taking of rewards whereby justice is perverted, and the innocent oppressed. (*R. Turnbull.*) *The lawfulness of usury considered:*—The Rev. W. J. Dawson, replying to the question "Is usury right?" says: "John Ruskin replies, No. His contention is that if a man has £15,000 it is his duty to spend his principal pound by pound, but to put it to usury, that is to interest, is a sin against society. I confess I have never been able to accept this doctrine. When we talk of £15,000 it is one thing; but apply it to £1000, which we will say is the entire fortune of a widow. If she spends it pound by pound she will soon come to beggary. If it be wisely invested, some one else has the use of it in the promotion of business, and she has a small annual income, which is the barrier between her and want. I do not understand Christ as denouncing usury. What the whole spirit of the Bible denounces is excessive usury." (*The Young Man.*) *He that doeth these things shall never be moved.*—*On tranquillity of mind:*—Inquire whether any line of conduct can be pointed out which, independent of external situation in the world,



shall tend to make us easy in mind ; shall either bestow or aid that tranquillity which all men desire. Direction: 1. That we imitate the character of the man who is described in this Psalm ; that we study to preserve a clear conscience, and to lead a virtuous and honourable, at least an inoffensive and innocent, life. So great is the power of conscience over every human being that the remembrance of crimes never fails to overthrow tranquillity of mind. Let him therefore, who wishes to enjoy tranquillity, study, above all things, to act an irreproachable part. 2. Join humble trust in the favour of God. As, after the best endeavours we can use, no man's behaviour will be entirely faultless, it is essential to peace of mind that we have some ground of hope in the Divine mercy, that through the merits of Jesus Christ our defects shall be forgiven, and grace be shown us by heaven. But a man may be both pious and virtuous and yet, through some defects in the management of his mind and temper, may not possess that happy serenity and self-enjoyment which ought to be the portion of virtue and piety. There is therefore some discipline to be studied ; there are some subsidiary parts of character to be attended to, in order to give piety and virtue their full effect for conferring tranquillity. 3. Attend to the culture and improvement of your minds. A fund of useful knowledge and a stock of ideas afford much advantage for the enjoyment of tranquillity. In a mind absolutely vacant, tranquillity is seldom found. The vacancy will too often be filled up by bad desires and passions. 4. Be always careful to provide proper employment of our time. Regular industry and labour, with intervals of ease, is perhaps the state most conducive of any to tranquillity. But if relaxation degenerate into total idleness it becomes in a high degree adverse to tranquillity. 5. Learn to govern our passions. These are the frequent disturbers of our peace. Such of them as belong to the malignant and unsocial class evidently tend to promote vexation and disquiet. If those which are accounted of an innocent nature obtain the entire mastery of our minds, they are sufficient to overthrow the tranquillity of life. This self-command is particularly necessary in all that relates to habitual temper: those slight emotions which ruffle or sour the temper are sufficient, by their frequent recurrence, to poison all self-enjoyment. He who would possess a tranquil state must cultivate calmness and gentleness of disposition. 6. Never expect too much from the world. High hopes and florid views are great enemies to tranquillity. When rashly indulged they are constantly producing disappointments. One of the first lessons, both of religion and wisdom, is to moderate our expectations and hopes. It is a middle region which is the native station of tranquillity. Do not form too high expectations from the character of those who are in social or domestic relations with you. 7. Mix retreat with the active business of the world, and cultivate habits of serious thought and recollection. Reflection and meditation allay the workings of many unquiet passions, and place us at a distance from the tumults of the world. The three great enemies to tranquillity are vice, superstition, and idleness. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *A man unmoved*:—"He that doeth these things shall never be moved." How glorious is the assurance ! The companion of the Lord shall never slip. When he is walking over the enchanted ground he shall be preserved wakeful and vigilant. He shall know where the slippery places are, and where the traps are hid, and he shall cross the devil-haunted ground in security. He shall not be carried away by the storm. He shall be unmoved in the blast of adversity. When death comes he shall still stand ! The Lord is his keeper, the Lord is at his right hand, disaster shall only strengthen him. "All things shall work together for his good." Such is the companion of God. Into that fellowship we are all called. What God wishes us to be He is prepared to make us. His ideals are His promises. His commandments are invitations. His high callings are gracious evangels. "Our sufficiency is of God." (*J. H. Jovett, M.A.*) *The fixedness and safety of the ungodly*:—"A ship's compass is so adjusted as to keep its level amidst all the heavings of the sea. Though forming part of a structure that feels every motion of the restless waves, it has an arrangement of its own that keeps it always in place, and in working order. Look at it when you will, it is pointing, trembling perhaps, but truly, to the pole. So each soul in this life needs an adjustment of its own, that amid the fluctuations of the "earthen vessel" it may be kept ever in a position to feel the power of its great attraction in the skies. (*A Parsons Penn.*) *Of false pretences to godliness*:—"Religion consists in action; the truth and power of piety lie in practice." "He that doth these things." Prove—(1) From the subject of religion, the mind, heart, soul of man. Actions are the best expressers of the mind. (2) From the nature of the covenant betwixt God and us. Action is the condition on our part. (3) From

the manner of procedure on the great day of accounts, when the eternal retributions shall be adjusted to men according to their works. It is not a bare external profession which many poor ignorant souls content themselves with that will serve the turn. A Christian profession, without a life answerable, will be so far from saving any one that it will highly aggravate his condemnation. There are those who think it enough barely to believe, and take faith alone to be the only Gospel term, and of itself all sufficient for salvation. Faith is, however, not a strong fancy or a rash presumption. Faith is no unactive principle, but a stirring grace that purges and purifies the heart, the source of actions and works by love. He that would be sure of his justification by faith must first be sure to justify his faith by his works. If faith will not do, much less can opinion. It cannot be imagined that any system of notions swimming in the brain should bear us out, and help us to attain our end. What shall we say of those whose whole religion is built upon uncertainty, and whose main principle is irresolution? Neither can I approve the ordinary mode of some that pretend to more than ordinary piety, to place all religion in the ear, that take up so much of their time in hearing that they have scarce leisure to practise. It is not lining the ears, nor tipping the tongue with religious discourses that will do the business. Neither preaching nor prayer of themselves will do. We must work as well as pray. A word must be said of the "well-wishers," who rest upon their good intentions, and take it for a sufficient ground for them to hope well because they mean well. This harmless "meaning well" is not enough to approve a man's spiritual state, or acquit his obligations. (*Adam Littleton, D.D.*)

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### PSALM XVI.

**VERS. 1-11. Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust.**—*Faith in the presence of God:*—This term suggests that the Psalm is one of strongly marked, incisive thought. It is a Psalm doubly notable—1. Because it contains one of the brightest and most unhesitating expressions of faith in the presence of God, as extending through and beyond death, and preserving the life both of soul and body. It therefore stands in marked contrast with the desponding doubts of such passages as *Psa. lxxxviii.*—basing itself on the conviction, which our Lord declared to underlie the whole covenant, that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 2. Because it is quoted most explicitly in the New Testament as a Messianic prophecy, an inspired utterance, which was no doubt in some degree applied by the Psalmist to himself as having unity with God, and therefore defying death, but which could be in its full meaning spoken of the Messiah alone (*Acts ii. 25-31, xiii. 35*). For in Him alone was the unity with God to be perfect—so that He should be at once "the son of David," and yet "God with us"—therefore in Him alone was it impossible that humanity could be "holden of death," either in the "prison" of Hades (*1 Pet. iii. 19*) or the "corruption" of the grave. (*Alfred Barry, D.D.*) *Jehovah, the believer's chief good:*—This poem naturally falls into three strophes. 1. The writer's utterances to God, and God's people of his supreme delight in Jehovah (*vers. 1-4*). 2. The direct statement of the blessedness of such a lot (*vers. 5-8*). 3. The assurance that it would prevail over death and the grave (*vers. 9-11*). Cheyne says, the Psalmist assumes successively the tone of profession, of description, and of prophecy. I. THE PROFESSION. In view of the fluctuations and uncertainties of the world, the writer invokes God's preserving care, for the reason that this is his habitual resort. He neither has nor wishes any other. But this absolute dependence on the Most High is very far from being servile or constrained. It is spontaneous and joyous. He knows no fountain of true happiness save Jehovah. The love of saints and the abhorrence of idolatrous apostates go together. II. THE DESCRIPTION (*vers. 5-8*). Here is an emphatic statement of the fact that nothing earthly, visible, material is what satisfies the Psalmist, but only Jehovah Himself. It is the Giver, not His gifts, that meets his wants. The happiness of such a condition is insisted on. In David's eyes God is no abstraction, but a person real, living, walking by his side. Hence his abiding confidence. The whole utterance is one of strong triumphant faith. III. THE PROPHECY (*vers. 9-11*). Here the description of the present passes into a forecast of the future. Some of the

terms are peculiar. "Glory" probably means "tongue." "Sheol" is the place of departed spirits. "Corruption" may mean "the pit." The poet is taking a calm outlook upon death and the grave as they lie before every man in the natural course of events. Shall this be the end of his career? Nay, heart and flesh alike are safe. David will not be abandoned to the dismal shades, nor will his bodily frame perish irrecoverably. The Psalm as a whole is a remarkable exhibition of Old Testament piety. (*Talbot W. Chambers, D.D.*) A good hope:—The heading of this Psalm, and of *Psa. lvi.-lx.*, "Michtam," may mean "Golden Psalm," or "Sculpture Psalm," this latter term indicating a Psalm of strong incisive thought. The Psalm seems, "by its tone of fresh, joyous confidence, to belong to the early part of David's career." It may have been written when David was in the wilderness of Ziph (*1 Sam. xxvi. 19*). The Psalm may be used to illustrate the following points: 1. Only out of an experience of God's gracious dealings can a full trust in God be gained. David had known God from his early shepherd life. 2. The uncertainty of all things on which men rely; men change or fail; riches take wings; of many possessions we tire, but trust in God never disappoints. He is the one satisfying good. 3. Those who have God at all must have Him for all in all. No idols must draw us away. Self-seeking and world-seeking pleasures may be our idols. 4. Keeping close to God is security for this world, and for the world to come. Really right is right with God, and whoever is really right is right for ever. The joy we have in God, neither time, nor change, nor death can end. The following subjects are treated: Soul-joy in God. Soul-joy in the godly. Soul-fear of the ungodly. Soul-confidence in the present. Soul-purpose to maintain the godly life. Soul-assurance that God will maintain loving relations with the godly for ever. (*Robert Tuck, B.A.*) The good man's plea:—The Psalmist entreats Divine protection, rejoices in his religious privileges, and expresses unbounded confidence in God. I. A GOOD MAN'S CRY FOR DIVINE PROTECTION. Whether his peril arose from the idolatrous heathen or from domestic enemies, we cannot say; but it was sufficiently urgent to drive him to God for shelter. Is not this one of the chief uses of earthly trials? II. A GOOD MAN'S ARGUMENTS FOR A DIVINE RESPONSE. 1. He pleads his faith in God. 2. He pleads his own moral value (*vers. 4-6*). A holy exultation now thrills the Psalmist's heart. There are two sources of his joy. 1. The sight of the misery of idolaters. 2. The contemplation of his own blessedness. The figurative language of *ver. 6* is derived from the division of the land of Canaan amidst the tribes of Israel. Precious truths underlie it. (1) The nature of his inheritance. (2) The certainty of his inheritance. (3) The pleasantness of his inheritance. (*Robert Rollocks.*) The Divine preservation:—The Psalmist will be "preserved"; he will not only be created. There is a cold deism which says, "Having been created, that is enough; the rest belongs to myself; I must attend to the details of life; creation may have been a Divine act, but all education, culture, progress, preservation must fall under my own personal care." The Psalmist begins in another tone. He opens his Psalm with the great word "preserve"—equal to, Attend to all my cares and wants; pity my feebleness; take hold of my right hand, and of my left hand, and be round about me, and never leave me for one moment to myself. That is true worship. Only a sense of the Divine nearness of that kind can adequately sustain a noble and growing religion. We need a daily prayer; we die for want of daily food; every morning must be a revelation in light, every night must be a revelation in rest. This is not a selfish preservation, a preservation from evil, or danger, or suffering only, but the kind of preservation that is necessary to growth. Who has not seen the guards round the trees, especially the little trees, the young growths, so that they may have a chance of taking hold of the earth, and lifting themselves up to the sun, and bringing out of themselves all the secret of the Divine purpose in their creation? A selfish preservation would be an impious desire, but the preservation being asked for as an opportunity of growth is a preservation for which the noblest souls may daily pray. It is, then, not enough to have been created; even that Divine act becomes deteriorated and spoiled, impoverished, utterly depleted of all ennobling purpose and inspiration, unless it be followed by continual husbandry or shepherdliness, nursing or culture—for the figure admits of every variety of change; the end being growth, strength, fruitfulness. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) The portrait of a God-trusting soul:—Such soul is represented in two aspects. I. HIS EXPERIENCE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESENT. He has—1. A profound consciousness of his dependence for safety and for good. "My goodness extendeth not to Thee." That is, my happiness is not independent of Thee. 2. A delight in the fellowship of the good.



"The saints, the excellent, in whom is all my delight." 3. An abhorrence of the practices of the wicked. "Their drink-offering of blood will I not offer." 4. An exultation in the Lord as his portion. 5. A high satisfaction with providential arrangements. "The lines have fallen to me," &c. II. IN REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE. He is—1. Thankful. "I will bless the Lord." 2. Thoughtful. "My reins also," &c. 3. Calm. "I shall not be moved." 4. Happy. "My heart is glad." 5. Trustful. "My flesh also shall rest in hope"—(i) Of restoration to life. "Thou wilt not leave," &c. (ii) Of happiness. "The path of life." (iii) Of fulness of joy in God's presence. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The plea of our trustfulness:*—The first thing David does is to commend himself to the protection of God, as the God in whom he had placed his confidence. This is what all of us will do who are living under the influence of vital and experimental religion. If we be among the number of His people, we may confide in Him with our whole heart, for every communication of His grace, and for every exercise of His power, which our varied circumstances may require. This trust we will constantly repose in God, because He is constantly deserving of it, and because it is constantly demanded for our personal comfort and stability. It will be especially active and vigorous when we are exposed to those peculiar difficulties and dangers by which every Christian is beset in the course of his pilgrimage. We may not rest satisfied with a mere consciousness of unlimited reliance on God; we may give it free expression in the language of devout and fervent supplication. We have found in God an all-sufficient refuge. This Psalm intimates that he had taken the Lord to be his Lord; and it is impossible for any of us, who are acquainted with our duty and our interest, to make a better or a different choice. He is entitled to the supremacy over us in every respect in which that supremacy can be either exercised by Him or acknowledged by us. It is not only our duty, it is also our interest, to take the Lord for our Lord. In this dedication of ourselves to God it is necessary that the heart be really and chiefly concerned. It is the soul that must say to Him, "Thou art my Lord." Aware of our aptness to forget what we have resolved and promised in reference to God, we must frequently remind our souls, as it were, of the ties by which they are voluntarily and solemnly bound to Him, and of the consequent obligations which they have to fulfil. We are not our own, but His. We cannot be too careful to prevent this impression from being impaired. Another evil is to be guarded against: the Pharisaical idea is apt to steal upon us, that we have something to boast of, that our labours may be beneficial to Him to whom they are rendered, and that on account of these we are entitled to His favour and protection. There cannot be a greater or more pernicious mistake. While our goodness extendeth not to God, so as that it can be useful to Him or meritorious in His sight, the Psalmist says, "It extendeth to the saints that are in the earth." There are saints in the earth. But their holiness has much imperfection mixed with it, and comes far short of what the Divine law requires of them. It exists in their principles, in their desires, in their endeavours, and in their actual acquirements. Being thus "saints," they are "excellent." God is the standard of excellence, and they are like God. The Psalmist not only asserts the excellence of the saints, but declares that in them was "all his delight." And such will be the case with us if our minds are actuated and governed by right sentiments. We shall delight in God as the centre of all perfection, and as the fountain of all good. We shall delight in such of His creatures as are entitled to our complacency from the resemblance which they bear to Him. It is to the saints, who are thus excellent, and in whom we take delight, that our goodness extends; we do them good according to our ability. Between them and us there is a spiritual and intimate relationship. And we are especially careful to let our goodness extend to them when they are suffering persecution on account of their marked separation from the world, and their faithful adherence to the cause of truth and duty. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.—*Dedication to God:*—The Most High is a God of truth and faithfulness. The text alludes to David's dedication of himself to God, and implies that he had done so deliberately and sincerely. 1. Apply the words for admonition. Remember that it were better not to vow than, after having vowed, not to pay. A dedication is one of the best preservatives against temptation and sin. 2. Apply for instruction. They teach us what David thought of God. They teach that his dedication was deliberate and sincere. 3. Apply for comfort and encouragement. If you have thus dedicated yourself, then to you the promises and consolations of the Gospel belong. Reflections

by way of improvement—(1) Abide in Christ. (2) Do much for Him to whom you owe so much. (3) Be assured that God will do much for you. (*John Ramsay, M.A.*) *The advantages of a Christian reviewing his dedication to God*:—I wish I could have heard what you said to yourselves when I read these words. I could guess the language of some of you. You thought, "I never said anything to the Lord, except it was—Depart from me." Others of you, perhaps, said, "I believe that I did once say so to the Lord, but it was so long ago that I had forgotten it. It must have been when I was in trouble. But I cannot say it now." Others said, "Yes, I have said that, and often, and I am glad to say it again." Good men are excellent company for themselves, for they can converse with their souls. David is doing so here. He is telling of his dedication to God, and reviewing what he then said. Now this is a good thing to do. I. IT IS USEFUL IN THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION. It will not prevent, necessarily, the assaults of sin, nor our being overcome by them. The eleven disciples forsook Christ, though they had solemnly engaged not to do so. But it is a help against such temptations to be often reviewing our vows to God. It arms us against sin. II. AS A BOND OF DILIGENCE AND CONSISTENCY IN DUTY. Many also would stand back from wilful sins and grosser vices, yet grow remiss in their duty and become less circumspect. Now against this it is well to preserve a remembrance of our covenant engagements. III. TO AFFORD GREAT RELIEF IN DISTRESS. The believer may be subject to great spiritual distress. The light of God's countenance may be withheld, and grace be very feeble. Then such communion with our own souls and with the Lord, as is indicated here, does help us much. Tell Him how we desire to stand to our engagements, and to be His for ever. So our hearts will brighten even in the midst of flowing tears. IV. AS A SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF DEATH. Nothing, then, but what is real and substantial will serve. Death is rapidly approaching. "So let it," cries the devoted servant of God; "the sooner it comes the better. The God whom I have served is able to deliver me; and He will deliver me from thy sting, O death, and from all the power of the grave. Many years ago I said to the Lord, Thou art my Lord, and He honoured me with a place among His servants; and now I feel Thee, blessed Saviour, to be the strength of my heart; and I depend upon Thee as my portion for ever. Into Thine hand I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Well, then, do you not think that happy is the people whose God is the Lord? But I want more than your approval. I want to know if you have said to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord." Let me ask—1. Have you ever felt the misery of being without God? 2. Have you ever given time for serious thought on this question? How solemn is your condition who live all your days in a hurry of business or thoughtless dissipation! But you who have taken the Lord to be your God, I would say to you: Cleave to God with purpose of heart. This is the bond of the servants of the Lord. "I, such an one, whose name is hereunto subscribed, do hereby renounce all other masters which have had dominion over me, and bind myself to the Lord, to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life: So help me God." And do much for Him. Also expect much from Him; you shall not be disappointed. And finally, you shall receive a crown of life. None ever served God for nought. (*S. Lavington.*) *A sacramental meditation*:—1. BEFORE PARTAKING. It was David's wont, when in distress and ready to doubt whether he had really dedicated himself to God, to remind himself of the solemn transactions which had passed between him and God. 1. Let us consider the meaning and import of these words. He acknowledges God's property in him, and claim upon him. And that he desires to be the Lord's; that he prefers God to all else. He had chosen and acknowledged God as his God. And now, in distress, he repeats all this. 2. Let us remember what professions we have made. It is reasonable that we should; for we are in danger of forgetting. The world wears out the memory of them; and our afflictions tempt us to doubt that Jehovah is our Lord. Therefore it is good to renew our covenant. And it will help us to be more sensible of our duty, and will animate us under every suffering. And as we thus renew our vows we shall see such excellence in them as will engage us to fulfil them with diligence. 3. And there is no more fit time for this than at the Lord's table. We commemorate the everlasting covenant. We profess our faith in Christ's sacrifice. By His blood, which the wine represents, we are brought nigh to God and admitted into endearing relation to Him. Therefore let us, &c. II. AFTER PARTAKING. Let us take review of what we have done, and each adopt the language of David, "O my soul," &c. This means, "I entirely approve, and give thanks for being inclined to say this." And acknowledge past unworthy behaviour. Failure in love

to Him, and in faithfulness. But "I desire that I may not again neglect my duty, that I may not yield to temptation, nor follow the world too eagerly, nor say to it what I had said to the Lord." Are we in affliction? That is a time to repeat the acknowledgment. "Thou hast said to the Lord, Thou art my Lord; in Thee I have all things. Thou canst and wilt support and comfort me; make up my earthly losses, and teach me to glory in tribulation." Finally, do we feel the sentence of death in ourselves? There is no time more proper to repeat the acknowledgment, "Thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord; my God, whom I have sincerely loved and served; to whom I have often committed my soul through Christ; and I would do it again with gratitude, hope and joy, when flesh and heart are failing." Let us thus, in every circumstance of life and death, remember our covenant transactions. If you have sincerely said, and are saying to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord," let this be your comfort, that "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." (J. Orton.)

Ver. 3. All my delight is upon the saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue (P. B. V.).—*Divine love for the saints of God*.—On All Saints' Day our mind seems almost to sink beneath the great and holy thoughts which come crowding in upon it, when we think of that vast multitude which no man can number, of all ages, of all nations, of all ranks of life, of all mental and bodily endowments, who, having come out of great tribulation, now rejoice in the presence of Him whom on earth they loved. The Church to-day is proclaiming the truth of the words of our text. But it is not the Church alone, our Lord Himself shares in this delight. He beholds the beautiful things that He has made; but the King of the heavenly Jerusalem has fairer prospects than these. There is something on earth which He sees and values. The saints for the most part live a hidden life; the world despises their aims, perhaps laughs at their frailties. They pass away, and their names are forgotten, or live only in the memory of the Church, but the Lord makes them the sum and centre of His care and love. He greatly rejoices in the work of His grace, as it displays itself in His elect. Their shortest prayer, their slightest act of self-denial He notices. He gathers them, one by one, out of the ruined mass of humanity, to be jewels in His heavenly diadem. (S. W. Skeffington, M.A.) *The saint's ministry to his brethren*.—God's goodness should make us merciful to others. It were strange indeed a soul should come out of His tender bosom with a hard uncharitable heart. Some children do not, indeed, take after their earthly parents, as Cicero's son, who had nothing of his father but his name; but God's children all partake of their heavenly Father's nature. Philosophy tells us that there is no reaction from the earth to the heavens; they, indeed, shed their influences upon the lower world, which quicken and fructify it, but the earth returns none back to make the sun shine the better. David knew that his goodness extended not unto God, but this made him reach it forth to his brethren. Indeed, God has left His poor saints to receive the rents we owe unto Him for His mercies. An ingenuous guest, though his friend will take nothing for his entertainment, yet, to show his thankfulness, will give something to his servants. (William Gurnall.) *Moral distinctions*.—Is this an arbitrary and invidious distinction? We read of the "saints," and the "excellent." Are there, then, some people who are not saints, and some saints who are not excellent? The Bible does not create distinctions. If there were no Bible the earth would still be distributed into qualities, orders, classes, and the like. The Bible proceeds to a finer discrimination. It analyses honesty, it puts wisdom to the test, it searches into the credentials of faithfulness. The Bible asks, What is the motive underlying character? By "saints" understand separated men. The word "saint" is simply a moral or spiritual distinction. It involves more than is commonly understood by an honest man, or a good man, or a well-living man. It indicates of necessity a connection with the ineffably holy, the perfect, the Divine. It means, at least, an inspiration eternal, rising towards the eternity inaccessible—that is, the supreme life—that is, the life Divine. The terms "saints," "excellent" are of a universal quality. The reference is to character, not to opinion, nor to varied ways of looking at things which cannot be positively settled. The Psalmist dwells upon the eternal quantity—character, holiness, excellence, pureness; these speak all languages, assume the hues of all climes, and under manifold outward diversity conceal an agreement subtle and indefinable as life itself. (Joseph Parker, D.D.) *The saints of God*.—Since the seventh century the first day of November has always been dedicated to the memory of All Saints. Such a day suggests thoughts as solemn and as needful as any which could



be presented to us. We watch the procession of mankind as it winds through the long centuries of history, and we note its most striking figures. The vast mass consists of a nameless throng. To our eyes mankind is mainly divided into the eminent and the obscure, the known and the unknown. But to the eye of God, to the eyes of all spirits, it may be, the aspect of that procession is very different. To them the inch-high differences of human rank have simply no existence; for them the thistles of human loftiness have no elevation, and the paltry mole-hills cast no shadow. For they know but one distinction, that of the evil and the good. We can see, on the whole, that some men have dared to be eminently good, and that others have been conspicuously, infamously bad. With unspeakable relief we turn from them to the saints of God. "In them is the healing of the world." Do not think of the mere title "saints"; it has been given to some, at least, who have no claim to it, and it has been denied to many more who have been consummately worthy of it. On All Souls' Day we may think not only of those whom the Church has called saints, but also of the long line of heroes of the faith in olden times who are not called saints—of the patriarchs, of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and many more; of brave judges, glorious prophets, patriot warriors, toiling apostles; of the many martyrs who would rather die than live; of hermits who fled from the guilt and turmoil of life; of the missionaries, Paul, Columba, Benedict, Xavier, Schwartz, and a long roll-call of others. Of reformers, of wise rulers, of the writers of holy books, of the slayers of monstrous abuses; of good bishops, good pastors; of all true poets, whether sweet and holy, or great and mighty like Dante and Milton. These are but a few of those who have reflected the glory of their Master, Christ, and who walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. If we would comfort our hearts, strengthen good resolutions, and retain that high estimate of human nature which it is such a misfortune to lose, and which so often threatens to succumb, let us in days like these make ourselves acquainted with Christian history and biography as the antidote to the degeneracy of these worldly and evil days. From earth's mire and darkness lift up your eyes to this galaxy of great examples. We need something to keep alive our faith in the dignity of man. I, for one, find that something, most of all, in dwelling in the life and sufferings of Christ, and next, in considering the blessed example of those who have followed Him, each bearing his own cross. They will help us by furnishing gleaming instances of pure and possible human goodness; they show us how, by true faith in Christ, men just as weak as we are, tempted as we are, yet did gloriously and conspicuously triumph over sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and thereby proved to us that we can do the same. See how the universal idol, selfishness, has been gloriously overcome. Pride, too, has been subdued. St. Thomas, of Aquino, was by far the greatest man of his age. One day at Bologna, a stranger arriving at his monastery asked the prior for some one to help him to get provisions and carry his basket. "Tell the first brother you meet," said the prior. St. Thomas was walking in meditation in the cloister, and, not knowing him by sight, the stranger said to him, "Your prior bids you to follow me." Without a word the greatest teacher of his age, the "Doctor Angelicus"—the angel of the schools, as he was called by the affection of his admirers—bowed his head, took the basket, and followed. But he was suffering from lameness, and since he was unable to keep up with the pace, the stranger rebuked him soundly as a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow, who ought to show more zeal in religious obedience. The saint meekly bore the unjust reproaches, and answered never a word. "Do you know to whom you are speaking, who you are treating in this rude way?" said the indignant citizens of Bologna, who had witnessed the scene. "That is Brother Thomas, of Aquino." "Brother Thomas, of Aquino?" said the stranger, and immediately throwing himself upon his knees, he begged to be forgiven. "Nay," said St. Thomas, "it is I who should ask forgiveness, since I have not been so active as I should have been." And this humility, so rare in little men, was the chief characteristic of this great man. From that disciplined and noble spirit of the first man of his age all pride had been expelled. "Give me, O Lord,"—this was his daily prayer,—*"a noble heart which no earthly affection may drag down."* What more would we have if, even through so deep a valley of humiliation, there still lies the path to heaven? You see a life spent in brushing clothes, and washing crockery, and sweeping floors, a life which the proud of the earth would have regarded as the very dust beneath their feet, a life spent at a clerk's desk, a life spent at a tradesman's counter, a life spent in a labourer's hut, may yet be so ennobled by God's mercy that for the sake of it a king may gladly yield his crown. Thank God there have been and are tens of thousands of holy and

faithful, and therefore happy, souls, full of inward peace. Will you be one of their number? (*Dean Farrar.*) In whom is all my delight.—*The moral force in the world of God's elect*.—The history of mankind, whether secular or religious, resolves itself ultimately into the history of a few individuals. For though the masses live, yet it is these few who determine the direction and shape the spirit of the age. The rest die and are forgotten; one epitaph would do for them all, except for two or three out of the million. Another fact, and a sadder one, is that the human race seems to tend downwards. The old Greek proverb says, and truly, "the majority are evil." The few only are saints, the few only are heroes. There is bitter truth in David's saying, "All men are liars"; and in Carlyle's, that "the world is peopled by a thousand millions, mostly fools." How dreadful, then, would the condition of the world be were it not for God's elect few. The deliverance of man has never been wrought by the multitude, but by the individual. See this illustrated in poetry, in philosophy, in art, in science; the leaders are a few, all the rest follow. But art and the rest will not alone save a people. History shows how along with them nations have sunk into the abyss of degradation. So will England, so will every nation, if she refuse the message of God. Of what use would the spangles of art and science be upon the funeral pall of the dying race if death were the end of all? The hope of the world lies in the recognition of, and in obedience to, the Word of God as uttered by His special messengers; and by so listening as to reflect in myriads of gleams, and to reverberate in millions of echoes, the light and the voice of inspiration. In illustration of all this glance at the moral history of the world. What drear darkness in the main prevailed from Adam to Abraham, that great hero of the faith. After him darkness again until Moses. After him till Samuel and the prophetic order. After them till Christ and the apostles. After Him and them the world gradually grew worse; Christianity itself became corrupted till St. Anthony, forsaking all, made his home in the lonely desert, to convince his generation of the infinite value of every human soul. And from his day, now and again, great saints were inspired of God from time to time,—such as Benedict I., Gregory VII., Francis of Assisi, until in the midst of another dark period the lion-hearted Luther shook the world. It is by such men the world has been kept from moral death; such seems to be the method of God's working. Now let us note some of the lessons of this Divine method. I. WHAT IS THE SECRET, THE SOLE SECRET OF MORAL POWER? Who that reads the signs of these times can fail to see how much this age needs that secret? What was it that again and again overcame the world? Was it not faith showing itself by self-sacrifice? See it in Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and all else. II. THAT THE WORK OF THESE SAINTS IS NEVER PERMANENT. There is infinite pathos in the failures of men and of institutions. Their work has perpetually to be renewed. Abraham died, and ere a century had elapsed his children were slaves. And so with all the rest. III. APPARENT FAILURES WERE NEVER ABSOLUTE FAILURES. No good man ever lives in vain. Each saint has his own Calvary. St. Telemachus was butchered in the arena, but because of his death an end was put to gladiatorial games. What a candle did Latimer and Ridley light in England through their martyrdom, and its light glows still. Then let man think, however discouraged he may be at the moral aspect of men, that a holy Christian life can never be in vain. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God.—The sorrows of idolaters*.—There is no other fact more incontrovertibly established than the fact that idolatry of every sort is a system of sorrows. Forsaking the one living and true God to serve other gods has written the scroll of human history, within and without, with mourning and lamentation and woe. The command, "Thou shalt have no other gods, but Me," is a command grounded in the nature of things, and the necessities of the human soul. The human soul cannot have any other god without piercing itself through with many sorrows. The moment it adopts, as the object of its supreme love and adoration, any other being than the Lord God it begins to degenerate. The result is the same degeneracy where the attempt is made even to blend with the worship of the true God the worship of other beings. Saint worship has proved as disastrous to human progress as the worship of pagan gods and heroes. Italy has been as sadly degraded by papal as it ever was by pagan Rome. Jupiter, and Venus, and Bacchus, and Mars have only been displaced by saints as little entitled to our respect. It is only as the soul chooses for its worship an object of supreme excellence that it rises in the scale of moral and intellectual dignity. Such an object David's soul had chosen as the God

of its worship: "Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips." Drink offerings of wine were offered by the Israelites; but all such offerings of blood were forbidden them (Lev. xvii. 9-14). The heathen, however, in their worship, both drank and offered blood. It will be recollected by the reader of history that Catiline pledged his accomplices in a goblet of blood, binding them by fearful oaths to the performance of fearful deeds, previous to explaining to them his plan for the massacre of the Roman senate and people. Hannibal, too, is said to have made a blood-drinking vow. We have read also of a tyrant who, piercing his enemies with hot irons, and gathering the blood in a cup as it flowed, drank one half of it, and offered up the other half to his god. These illustrations go to prove that worshipping other gods than the true God degrades men more and more, until the words "brute" and "fiend" are the only words that accurately describe him. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *The misery of idolatry*:—The Psalmist here introduces the subject of idolatry, and forms respecting it a worthy and decided resolution. He speaks of the misery of such as attach themselves to the worship and service of false gods. Not only shall they be subjected to calamity, but their calamities shall be manifold. This arises from two causes. The gods in whom they have placed their confidence are mere imaginary beings. And by forsaking the true God they have forfeited all the advantages which trust in Him and obedience to Him would have certainly produced. On account of the sinfulness and misery of such conduct the Psalmist determined that he should not be chargeable with it. True, we are not in danger of becoming idolaters in the literal and original sense of the word. But the substance of the crime is contained in your feeling and showing a stronger attachment to some other being than to the Supreme Being. It is of no consequence what it is to which you thus pay the homage and give the glory which are due to God alone. Idolatry is to serve the creature more than the Creator. Beware of the guilt of idolatry, and of the vengeance which impends over those who indulge in it. The Psalmist goes on to say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." This refers both to the future life and to the present, "the life that now is." In all that happens to us we will recognise the operation of His combined mercy and wisdom and faithfulness. Then our "lines will have fallen in pleasant places." But our principal concern is with our spiritual circumstances. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*)

**Vers. 5, 6. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.**—*Man's true treasure in God*:—I. ALL TRUE RELIGION CONSISTS IN DELIBERATELY CHOOSING GOD AS MY SUPREME GOOD. Now, how do we possess God? We possess things in one fashion and persons in another. The lowest and most imperfect form of possession is that by which a man simply keeps other people off material good, and asserts the right of disposal of it as he thinks proper. A blind man may have the finest picture that ever was painted; he may call it his, that is to say, nobody else can sell it, but what good is it to him? A lunatic may own a library as big as a Bodleian, but what use is it to him? Does the man that draws the rents of a mountain-side, or the poet or painter to whom its cliffs and heather speak far-reaching thoughts, most truly possess it? The highest form of possession, even of creatures, is when they minister to our thought, to our emotion, to our moral and intellectual growth. We possess even things, really, according as we know them and hold communion with them. And when we get up into the region of persons we possess people in the measure in which we understand them, and sympathise with them, and love them. A man that gets the thoughts of a great teacher into his mind, and has his whole being saturated by them, may be said to have made the teacher his own. A friend or a lover owns the heart that he or she loves, and which loves back again; and not otherwise do we possess God. And the ownership must be, from its very nature, reciprocal. And so we read in the Bible, with equal frequency: the Lord is the "inheritance of His people, and the people are the inheritance of the Lord." He possesses me, and I possess Him, with reverence be it spoken, by the very same tenure, for whose loves God has Him, and whom He loves He owns. We have God for ours in the measure in which our minds are actively occupied with thoughts of Him. We know Him. There is a real, adequate knowledge of Him in Jesus Christ; we know God, His character, His heart, His relations to us, His thoughts of good concerning us sufficiently for all intellectual and for all practical purposes. I wish to ask you a plain question. Do you ever think about Him? There is only one way of getting God for yours, and that is by the road of bringing Him into your life by frequent meditation upon His sweetness, and upon the truths



that you know about Him. There is no other way by which a spirit can possess a spirit that is not cognisable by sense, except only by the way of thinking about Him to begin with. All else follows that. That is how you hold your dear ones when they go to the other side of the world. II. THIS POSSESSION IS MADE AS SURE AS GOD CAN MAKE IT. "Thou maintainest my lot." The land, the partition of which amongst the tribes lies at the bottom of the illusive metaphor of my text, was given to them under the sanction of a supernatural defence; and the law of their continuance in it was that they should trust and serve the unseen King. It was He, according to the theocratic theory of the Old Testament, and not chariots and horses, their own arm and their own sword, that kept them safe, though the enemies on the north and the enemies on the south were big enough to swallow up the little kingdom at a mouthful. And so, says the Psalmist allusively, in a similar manner the Divine Power surrounds the man who takes God for his heritage, and nothing shall take that heritage from him. The lower forms of possession, by which men are called the owners of material possessions, are imperfect, because they are all precarious and temporary. Nothing really belongs to a man if it can be taken from him. What we may lose we can scarcely be said to have. They are mine, they were yours, they will be somebody's else to-morrow. Whilst we have them we do not have them in any deep sense; we cannot retain them, they are not really ours at all. The only thing that is worth calling mine is something that so passes into and saturates the very substance of my soul, that, like a piece of cloth dyed in the grain, as long as two threads hold together the tint will be there. That is how God gives us Himself, and nothing can take that out of a man's soul. He, in the sweetness of His grace, bestows Himself upon man, and guards His own gift, which is Himself, in the heart. He who dwells in God and God in him lives as in the inmost keep and citadel. The noise of battle may rage around the walls, but deep silence and peace are within. The storm may rage round the coasts, but he who has God for his portion dwells in a quiet inland valley where the tempests never come. No outer changes can touch our possession of God. They belong to another region altogether. Other goods may go, but this is held by different tenure. Root yourselves in God, making Him your truest treasure, and nothing can rob you of your wealth. We here in this commercial community see plenty of examples of great fortunes and great businesses melting away like yesterday's snow. Then, too, there is the other thought. He will help us so that no temptations shall have power to make us rob ourselves of our treasure. None can take it from us but ourselves, but we are so weak and surrounded by temptations so strong that we need Him to aid us if we are not to be beguiled by our own treacherous hearts into parting with our treasure. A handful of feeble Jews were nothing against the gigantic might of Assyria, or against the compacted strength of civilised Egypt, but there they stood, on their rocky mountains, defended not by their own strength but by the might of a present God. And so, unfit to cope with the temptations that are round about us as we are, if we cast ourselves upon His power and make Him our supreme delight, nothing shall be able to rob us of that possession and that sweetness. III. HE WHO THUS ELECTS TO FIND HIS TREASURE AND DELIGHT IN GOD IS SATISFIED WITH HIS CHOICE. "The lines"—the measuring cords by which the estate was parted off and determined—"the lines are fallen," because they would be thrown, "in pleasant places; yea!" not as our Bible has it, merely, "I have a goodly heritage," putting emphasis on the fact of possession, but "the heritage is goodly to me," putting emphasis on the fact of subjective satisfaction with the inheritance that he is to receive. No man that makes the worse choice of earth instead of God ever, in the retrospect, said, "I have a goodly heritage." One of the later Roman emperors, who was one of the best of them, said, when he was dying, "I have been everything, and it profits me nothing." No creature can satisfy your whole nature. Portions of it may be fed with their appropriate satisfaction, but as long as we feed on the things of earth there will always be part of our nature, like an unfed tiger in a menagerie, growling and grumbling for its prey, whilst its fellows are satisfied for the moment. No man that takes the world for his portion ever said, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places." For the make of your soul as plainly cries out "God!" as a fish's fins declare that the sea is its element, or a bird's wings mark it out as meant to soar. Man and God fit each other like the two halves of a tally. You will never get rest nor satisfaction, and you will never be able to look to the past with thankfulness, nor into the present with repose, nor into the future with hope, unless you can say, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." But oh! if you do, then you have

a goodly heritage, a heritage of quiet repose, a heritage of still satisfaction, a heritage which suits, and gratifies, and expands all the powers of a man's nature, and makes him ever capable of larger and larger possessions, of a God who ever gives more than we can receive, that the overplus may draw us to further desire, and the further desire may more fully be satisfied. The one true, pure, abiding joy is to hold fellowship with God and to live in His love. The secret of all our unrest is the going out of our desires after earthly things. They fly forth from our hearts like Noah's dove, and nowhere amid all the weltering flood can find a resting-place. The secret of satisfied repose is to set our affections thoroughly on God. Then our wearied hearts, like Noah's dove, will fold their wings and build, and nestle fast by the throne of God. "All the happiness of this life," said William Law, "is but trying to quench thirst out of golden empty cups." But if we will take the Lord for the "portion of our cup" we shall never thirst. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Lord the portion of His people*:—There are two things intimately connected with each other, and bearing much upon ourselves, which can neither be expressed nor conceived—the extent of human misery, and the depth of human sin. But our text calls us not to measure the extent of human misery, so much as to look at the mercy of God to all them who fear Him; not to let down line and plummet into the abyss of human depravity, but to look upon an exhaustless spring of consolation—the river that maketh glad the city of God, and of which we may drink for ever. We have not to listen to the self-upbraidings of those who have chosen wrong; but to describe the happy condition of those who have chosen right. We fearlessly assert that they only are happy who can say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance," &c. I. THE CHARACTER HERE DESCRIBED. 1. To such a man God is recognised in His real character, sovereign and supreme, the Source of all that is enjoyed here or expected hereafter. Here is the difference between those who serve the Lord and those who serve Him not. There is nothing of good in this world which is not open to the believer as much as to any one else; all instruments and appliances of happiness are bestowed on him as well as on them. But besides all this he can say, "The Lord is the portion," &c. How wretched they who have only this world. 2. But is God your portion? that is the great question. Do you know of any sinking into the grave without God, who have turned away from opportunities which will never return? Think of them, and resolve never to be as they. II. THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THE BLESSING,—PERPETUITY. The "lot" of the believer is to be "maintained," no matter how terrible and distressing his circumstances may be. And it is so. But this cannot be said of any worldly lot. Solomon had the world's best, yet his heart took no rest. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" is his verdict upon it all. But the wisdom and the power of God uphold the "lot" in which the believer rejoices. And this is not all a matter of opinion and faith. For the life of the godless will not bear reflection. Hence they hate solitude. But the believer when alone can say, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." And death has lost its sting, and the future brings no fear, for he knows that God will ever maintain his "lot." (*T. Dale, M.A.*) *How to use God*:—When the soul of man is born at the Cross-foot it is born into the inheritance of God; but no soul of man in that first moment of rapture realises all its inheritance, or comprehends what is meant by that gift. But as the years go on, amid the varied teaching of the Holy Spirit and the strain of daily life, the soul begins to press its fence-work out, and more and more to see God, until in hoary hairs the aged saint, upon the very brink of the other world, is able to feel that though he had all of God in the first moment of his conversion, he never knew how much God could be as when the vision of the other world is breaking upon his sight. I want to speak upon how the whole of God is yours, and to teach you how to use God, how to raise harvests from God's nature for your daily wants, how to find in God the harvests and the vintage and the ore, the jewels, the gold, and all the buried treasures of His nature, and how to take these things which are yours by right, and to make them living, permanent, and blessed realities in your daily experience and life. 1. God is the true portion of the soul. The inheritance is ours by gift. The sun gives itself to the flower to nourish it, and paint it, and feed it; and so the great God, in all the extent of His infinite nature, gives Himself to every soul of man, to become his portion, his inheritance. He gives Himself, but the gift is through birth. When you are regenerate, when you are born again, by the very fact of that supernatural act which has been wrought within your soul you become an heir of God and a joint heir with His Son. But it is not only yours by gift and by birth, it is yours through Christ. And it is by the Holy Ghost. Notice how

goodly a heritage it is. Because it is so perfectly adapted to us. Have you ever thought of the perfect adaptation of this earth to man? The macrocosm tallies with the microcosm, the outward with the inward. As the whole nature of man is fitted to the world where God has put him, so is the spirit of man fitted for God, and God for it. Even if there were no revelation of God, by a study of the yearnings of the heart of man, as the heart cries for God, you might formulate the essential features of the being of God: there is such a perfect adaptation between nature and the external world, and there is such a perfect adaptation between the soul and God. It is a goodly portion, because it satisfies us. The unrest of life comes in because you let your desires wander hither and thither like bees over a flower-garden. If you would only let God be your portion you would find that rest would hush your soul, and the peace that passeth understanding would settle down upon your life. And it is inexhaustible. There shall never come a time when you and I shall have reached the limit of the fulness of God. And it is secure. The soul that has made God its portion can look upon the unrest of the political world, the strife of man about money, the shattering of colossal fortunes, and the breaking up of great societies secure, because it has found its pasture-land, its harvest, its vintage, its ore, in God's nature, friendship, and presence. 2. How to use it—(1) Choose it. (2) Put away out of your life everything that interferes with your enjoyment of God. (3) Meditate on God. (4) appropriate Him. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The Lord the believer's portion*:—It was the speech of Paulinus, when his city was taken by the barbarians, "Domine ne excrucier ob aurum et argentum,"—Lord, let me not be troubled for my silver and gold which I have lost, for Thou art all things. As Noah, when the whole world was overwhelmed with water, had a fair epitome of it in the ark, having all sorts of beasts and fowls there; so he that in a deluge hath God to be his God hath the original of all mercies. He that enjoyeth the ocean may rejoice though some drops are taken from him. (*George Swinnoek.*) *God the only happy portion*:—Some years ago an eminent English noblewoman was studying at our Bible Institute in Chicago. I remember the day she left us. She told these two incidents. She said, "One day, over in the home country, I had a letter from a dear friend of mine, a lady, asking me to go at once and see her. I hurried to her home, and as I went up the elegant marble stairway, and saw the costly paintings which lined the walls, I said to myself, 'I wonder whether all this splendour and wealth make my friend happy.' I did not have to wait long to find out. The lady came rushing into the room, dropped into a seat by my side, and told me the misery of her heart. All the honours, all the dignity of her position did not give her joy. A time after this I went to visit a blind woman. She lived in a very poor cottage. It was a rainy day, and the water was dripping through the thatch over her head and gathering in a little pool at her feet. As I went in there, and saw the poverty and the blind eyes, I was driven to turn to the woman and say, 'Maggie, are you not miserable?' She turned those sightless eyes upon me, and said, 'What, lady,—I miserable! I, the child of a King, inheritor of the mansion He has gone to prepare for me—I miserable? No, lady; I am happy.'" Wealth had not brought joy to the one; a living faith had brought joy to the other in the midst of her poverty and misfortune. (*R. A. Torrey, D.D.*)

**Ver. 6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.**—*We ought to be content with providence*:—You have so many accommodations on the road of life that nothing but ignorance and ingratitude can make you discontented. Consider the age of the world in which you live. What conveniences of life we have now. Consider the country which you inhabit. If you could see all other countries you would prefer this. Especially notice the civil liberty which we enjoy. Consider the religion of this country. You have the Scriptures in your own tongue. To people under affliction I would give four words of advice—1. Observe the false principle on which you have founded your discontent. You have laid it down as a principle, that you ought to be free from all trouble in this present life. This is a bold step. 2. Observe the sufferings of others, and compare conditions. 3. Note the benefits you derive from afflictions. 4. Consider afflictions in the light of preparations for glory. Christians, of all men, should be least prone to discontent. (*Anon.*) *The inheritance of the people of God*:—The allusion in the text is to the measuring of land by lines, and appropriating each part to the proper owners. It may be understood of the great salvation and large inheritance which the people of God have in Christ. 1. THE LOCALITY DESCRIBED. 1. Pleasant places are rich and wealthy places. 2. Places of security. 3. Places of rest. 4. Hiding places. 5. Places of



provision. 6. High places. (Isa. lviii. 14.) II. THE NATURE OF THE VOUCH-SAFEMENT. "The lines." The expression may remind us of the enclosures or spiritual blessings which we have in Christ. 1. By lines may be meant the truths of the Gospel. 2. The line of everlasting love. 3. The line of redeeming grace. 4. The line of justifying righteousness. 5. The line of renewing grace. (*T. B. Baker.*) *The heritage of the saints*:—What can we wish for in an heritage that is not to be found in God? Would we have large possessions? He is immensity. Would we have a sure estate? He is immutability. Would we have a term of long continuance? He is eternity itself. (*W. Arrowsmith.*) *The happy lot of the godly*:—We may put this acknowledgment into the mouth of—I. AN INDULGED CHILD OF PROVIDENCE. There are many such; their cup runneth over. But let them remember their peril, which is that they should trust in uncertain riches, and make the creature a substitute for the Creator. The writer, some years ago, in a neighbouring city, received in the pulpit the following note, "The prayers of this congregation are earnestly desired for a man who is prospering in his worldly concerns." If he did this sincerely he did well, for such men need prayer. Yet these things are good in themselves, and show the bounty of God. What must that soul be who never owns, "The lines are fallen," &c. All cannot use this language, for all are not thus indulged. Yet more might and would did they but think how much brighter is their lot, though they murmur at it, than that of so many others. Let them look at this brighter side. II. AN INHABITANT OF THIS FAVOURED COUNTRY. It is natural for men to love their native country though it be but a poor one. But our lot—how favoured. III. A CHRISTIAN WITH REGARD TO HIS SPIRITUAL CONDITION. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." God has made over Himself to His people with all He is and all He has—to pardon, to sanctify, to support, and to receive them to eternal glory. (*William Jay.*) *Our goodly heritage*:—I. THE GOODLY LAND. The dominant expression of the Psalms is joy in God: entire trust, perfect hope, therefore abounding joy. There is something of childlike gladness in the songs of the Hebrew people mingled with the deep moans of life's sadness. Still, the joy is dominant; and it meant that deep down, under all man's sense of strain and struggle, there is an abiding belief in his heart that, through Christ, the order of things in the universe is good; that the world is good; that life is good; that the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth everywhere and always. Now, I want that we should make the language of the text our own, and so I would dwell on some of the more prominent features of the "goodly heritage" which we all enjoy. And we shall speak of the goodly land. The goodly land in which God planted His people, the goodly land in which He has planted us. I. PALESTINE IS THE ENGLAND OF THE EAST. I think it is Miss Martineau who says that nothing which she had seen about the world so reminded her of the rolling Yorkshire moors as the approach to Palestine by Hebron. God planted His people in a country singularly fair, glad, fertile, and homelike; where men could pass from under the shadow of the turn of nature, could lie in her lap and bask in her smile. Think of its physical condition (Deut. viii. 7–10 and xi. 10–12). It was in strong contrast to the monotonous regions around, a land of rich variety, of marked feature and animation. There is this sympathy between man and nature. Egypt and Mesopotamia are sympathetic with despotism; their rich, fat plains, vast and monotonous, have possessed little to occupy the imagination. They nurtured great herds of men, but there was little for men to cling to, to cherish, to fight and die for. Egypt was a long monotonous tract where life was lavish, especially in its baser and uglier forms, in the rich soft alluvial mud. Melons, onions, garlic, fish in abundance, in over-abundance. Cats and crocodiles were promoted to the temples; while the people, like the Egyptian fellahs to this day—the men who made the Suez Canal—were the helpless herds of weary workmen who built the Pyramids for the Pharaohs, and were content to drag on a dull, dreary, hopeless existence. And with Mesopotamia it was much the same. But pass into Palestine and you have at once a new world. Moses speaks with contempt of the agriculture of Egypt, where the land was watered with the foot, "as a garden of herbs." The country, as it were, tilled itself. Not so Palestine. Like the Rhineland or Switzerland, it was a matter of constant care. To live in it, as compared with Egypt or Babylonia, was an education. "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." Palestine, not Egypt, was their goodly home. II. AND THEN, OUR OWN LAND, ENGLAND, the Canaan to which in the early morning twilight of Christendom God led His sons. Yea, we have a goodly heritage. It is a land that demands but repays toil, is full of beauty, of fair skies, with sweet fruits and strong herbs, and where all the

products of the world are accessible. No doubt there is a dark side as well as a bright one. But marred as it is by sin, still, "Behold, it is very good." Seek by your prayers to draw it closer to Christ. III. THE GOODLY FELLOWSHIP. A goodly land can help us but little without goodly human fellowships to inhabit it. Here in England the human element has always been in full force. The nature of the people is strong, somewhat coarse in the grain perhaps, but, like the rude granite, capable of exquisite polish, and with a grandeur all its own into whatever form it may be wrought. And it has had a strong development. Are there anywhere stronger and deeper affections than there are in England? Love is that which binds, that seeketh not her own. Nowhere on earth has the battle of life been fought more sternly, with a result in individual character and energy which places us amongst the strongest and most masterful races of the world. And the fellowship of such a race has borne very rich and noble fruit. The men whom we have produced hold their own in comparison with any others, whether in the intellectual, political, or military world. When I number up my mercies I count it among the chief that I am born an Englishman. And God designed the ministry of human fellowship for the development of our nature (Gen. iii. 14-19). It is all there, in all its sadness and in all its gladness, its blessings and its pain. Our life was meant, from the first, to be one of close association. That of the Jews was. It was, like ours, a rich, stirring, closely knit social and political life. They were shut up with and to each other during their best years. And so was it with our own people. Men like King David came out of the one; men like King Alfred came out of the other. God's idea of man's life is not that of the ascetic who flies into the lonely desert from all human associations, but that by their associations and activities his higher life is to be saved. The Jewish state was distinctly built on the family. The woman had honour there such as she has in Christian England at this day—nay, a deeper honour. At the root of all human relations lie self-control and self-denial; not self-assertion. But the whole education of a man under the influence of society is an education in self-control and self-denial. It begins early with the mother. And yet how the mother loves her burden of children's cares. And the father takes up the burden and denies himself for his children. The success of Scotch lads is largely owing to the lessons of self-denial which they have seen practised, and so have learnt in their own homes. They have seen how their parents sacrificed themselves for their children. And such spirit is the principle of order, growth, and true prosperity. "I desire not this power," said King Alfred of his kingship; "but that I might leave behind me a memory of good works." IV. OUR GOODLY TASKS. For these are by no means the least precious part of the goodly heritage. The fundamental part of man's being is not with things, but with beings; not with the creation, but with his fellow-man and God. It is said that the totally blind are as a rule more serene and cheerful than the totally deaf. That means, that man belongs to his fellows by a closer and dearer bond than any which binds him to nature: he can better spare the vision of the whole universe than the voice of human sympathy and tenderness. So needful is human association and fellowship. But another ordinance of heaven for our good is our work. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." It looks hard and stern, yet it is most benignant. Hard toil under a fatherly discipline is reforming, and so heaven established it as the condition of our sinful lives. The sentence from a father's lips made the wilderness a goodly heritage for the exiles from Eden. Nature became a monitress rather than a mistress, urging him to toil, rather than wooing him to rest and play. But, we say, the tasks are goodly tasks, and you are bound to praise the Lord for them. The popular philosophy of the day denies this, though not in this country, where we seem to take more kindly to toil than do those under more sunny skies. "It is a hard world," you say, "a hard lot, a hard God." The Bible answers, "It is all ordained by a God who loves you and cares for you and who gave His Son to die for you. Of all the loving things which He has done for you, there is none more loving than this." Consider—1. The necessity of toil, hard and constant. It is connected, like death, with sin (Gen. iii. 17); teaches that the conditions of life are harder for us than the Creator designed for the man whom He made in His own image. The life of a pure and happy being is symbolised in Eden. We need not trouble about its historic verity: of its spiritual verity there is no doubt at all. But for sin there would be only labour, not toil,—the bitter element is born of transgression. 2. Note the fundamental principle of this ordinance of toil. It is to restore man to right relations to the things around him. Transgression had put him in a false relation, though the tempter told him it would be far otherwise: he would win all

he could desire at once (Gen. iii. 1-6). "Ye shall be as gods." The sentence of toil fell on man as a disenchantment. Sin had brought him into collision with the higher will, which orders the whole system of things, a collision which will bruise and crush him until he learns to obey. Hence toil is hard that we may learn this. And the ordinance has been effectual. They who have lived the life of toil have been ever those nearest the kingdom of heaven. V. THE GOODLY DISCIPLINE. It is the supreme exercise of faith to believe in its goodness, to accept it as a part of the heritage of benediction. It is hard to praise when the fibres of the soul are throbbing with anguish, and the heart reels under a pressure which it can no longer endure. Are there not nights too dark for even heaven to expect a song? And God is compassionate and gentle. But yet there is no depth of misery out of which praise may not come. Read 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, 16, 17. The gladdest songs have gone up from the profoundest depths. True joy springs from communion with those whom you most love, and that, no calamity can rid you of. Christ's presence, and smile, and tender touch and tone, no glooms, no depths can obscure. Nay, the darkness but makes the presence more luminous, and charged with richer benediction. Much of the complaints of our spirits God interprets as compassionately as in the passionate outbursts of a child in pain. God looks at the heart, not at the maddened utterances which the torture of pain produces. There are passages of human experience which hardly come within the pale of that goodly heritage of discipline for which I bid you praise. You cannot sing in them. "I was dumb because Thou didst it," is the most that we can say. But not of these depths, but of the ordinary discipline of life, do I speak,—the fact that life is a discipline, that we have not only to toil but to suffer. It is a school of culture, not a home, a rest. It would be very terrible for sinful man if he could command the stones to be made bread—that is, if he could make things obey him instead of God. What a hell he would make out of life. But the pain of life throws a man's thought back on his sin, shows him that in all its forms it is armed with scourges to smite him, and that his flesh shall quiver and the thongs shall be stained with his blood, ere he shall live on in the dream that the way of transgressors is peace. So would God wean us from sin and vice and folly. And when we learn the lesson, and are led to self-control and self-denial, the pain ceases and peace descends. But another and yet higher end of discipline than even conversion is to elevate, purify, and conform us to the image of God. VI. THE GOODLY HOPE. This is the last feature which I dwell upon. It completes and crowns the whole. Without the hope man's lot is a heritage which a brute might shrink from. For the broad fact of man's history is, that "he is born to trouble." It is written everywhere, it is the burden of life to us all. Nor is it the weakest and poorest in nature who are pressed most heavily, but the strongest, the bravest, the noblest, and the most faithful souls. Job was *the* righteous man of his era, and yet his life was an unspeakable curse till he remembered his hope, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But if these things be so, you may ask—What is the use of talking about the goodly heritage? How can men praise for such a life as this? And it would be mockery thus to speak but for the hope, the "good hope through grace." A few days ago I was talking with one of our ablest and most eminent writers in his department of literature, and he said, "I have absolutely no hope. God, Christ, immortality, I have no hold of; they are nought to me. All is darkness!" It was not said in bravado, not even in bitterness. But profound sadness was on him as he said it. No hope, because no Christ. All dark, because no hope. Now, the broad fundamental principle which lies at the root of this portion of our subject is, that man is here on earth not a settler but a pilgrim. The patriarchs of Israel are the true patriarchs of our race. As they dwelt in Canaan, man dwells in this world. But they were kept constantly moving; no place was suffered to be as home to them. Long ages of training had to be endured, as our long years of discipline, before they entered the goodly land into which the Lord had brought them, and could call it home. Now, behind this condition of pilgrimage lies the blessed fact that man is made on too large a scale, with too vast capacities, for this world to be enough for him. God has made us for eternity and for such a world as heaven. And so man is born to trouble precisely as a schoolboy is born to tasks and toils. "The heir differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." Were man only of this earth, how much would be his imagining and longing for beauty and goodness more than this world can ever give. But all goodness that is here is suggestive to them of a higher kind yonder. Fellowship is blessed. Yet without the hope, how terrible the breaking up of our earthly associations by death would be. But with the hope they are blessed.



And the tasks are good, but what drudgery they would be were there no hope to irradiate them. And so, too, of our disciplines. But to what end they, and the Cross, the symbol of them all, if hope is but a dancing marsh fire, and "glory, honour, and immortality" but a brilliant dream? If the highest outcome of life is that scene in Gethsemane and Calvary, and for Christ, and for those like Him, there was and is nothing beyond, what words can curse with sufficient emphasis the whole order of the universe? No, rather than believe that, may—

"Thy hand, great Anarch, let the curtain fall,  
And universal darkness bury all."

But how is this hope assured?—(1) By the revelation which is afforded to us of the essential nature of God and His revelation to the world; and (2) By the light which the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of the Lord Jesus casts upon life and its destinies. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." The Gospel story is one of solid historic truth, and our hope is the anchor of our soul. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *The quietude of true pleasure*:—Christian pleasure contrasts strongly with that of sin. For—I. CHRISTIAN PLEASURE IS AN INEXHAUSTIBLE FORCE. The pleasures of sin are for a season. Permanency is the true need of life, but the pleasures of sin burn up the nature, they exhaust. Now, to some extent when you get intellect you get permanence; but in animalism, only impermanence. But those which are filled with the mind, the heart, the spirit are fresh, and they do not exhaust. And the pleasure of the spirit in God is the true joy of the soul. It is filled with all the fulness of God. II. CHRISTIAN PLEASURE IS NOT A DETERIORATING POWER. It never debilitates our nobility and manhood, it never lets us down. But how much pleasure there is of which this cannot be said. III. CHRISTIAN PLEASURE IS NOT A NOISY THING. If I were asked what we have too much of, I should say, "Noise." We hear the blare of trumpets, and everything is loud. How quiet the old meeting-houses were. The Quaker quiet—how pleasant it is. IV. CHRISTIAN PLEASURE IS NOT A DANGEROUS POWER. You cannot have too much of it. Some pleasures, even innocent ones, are dangerous; they tend to preoccupy the mind. You let them in as guests, and by and by you find they have taken up all the house. V. CHRISTIAN PLEASURE IS NOT A SELFISH PLEASURE. We should prove this question on ourselves as to our pleasures, whether they are in the main unselfish. Pleasure will not come if you seek it, but if you pursue duty pleasure will be found. Religious ways are ways of pleasantness. The quiet Christian life which many have led has had in it more of charm than any other. (*W. M. Statham.*) *The saint's goodly heritage*:—This expression is the language of the highest contentment, of holy exultation, of the most superlative satisfaction. I. A SCRIPTURAL DRAWING OF THIS GOODLY HERITAGE. The saint's heritage is comprehensive of all the blessings of grace and glory. It must be good if these be its contents. This goodly heritage knows no bounds or limits. Appeal to the saint's charter. The saint is an heir of righteousness, of salvation, of the kingdom of heaven, of all things; an heir of God Himself. Have the saints such a goodly heritage, then see cause:—II. TO CONTEMPLATE AND ADORE THE UNBOUNDED GENEROSITY OF THE MOST BLESSED GOD. The thought of this threw the Apostle John into an ecstasy. We are not to estimate the saint's wealth or grandeur from what he possesses in this world. Poverty is often their lot on earth. (*W. Taylor.*) *The goodly heritage*:—How little does the infant, over whose cradle glistens the coronet first won by the stout arm of a soldier ancestor, understand of the inheritance to which he has been born. The ancestral home, the far-spread lands, the noble rank, the prestige of an ancient and lofty lineage—all these are his; but years will pass ere they can be fully realised or appreciated. It is impossible for the saint to estimate the value of the inheritance purchased by the precious blood of Christ, and which soon he will possess. (*R. Venting.*)

Vers. 7, 8. I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.—*The night counsels of the Lord*:—Under whatever circumstances the Lord gives His people counsel, they will find reason to bless His holy name. Well does this Psalm bear the title of Michtam—that is, a golden Psalm. Note—I. THE KIND OF COUNSEL GIVEN TO THE BELIEVER. It was, that by no arguments, however specious or however backed by circumstances, should he be diverted from faithful allegiance to God. There were many such arguments. Saul tried to draw him off from God. David tells how "they have

driven me out this day from the inheritance of the Lord, saying, 'Go serve other gods.'" But the Lord's counsel was, "Wait on the Lord and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." Now, the Lord gives similar counsel to all His people. David was a representative man. The transcript of his feelings forms a commonplace book for all God's servants in which they may find a counterpart of their own. As David was, so are they, anointed of the Lord. As Saul persecuted David, so Satan persecutes them, and seeks to make them "do despite to the Spirit of grace." II. THE TIMES AND CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THIS COUNSEL IS FREQUENTLY SOUGHT AND OBTAINED. It is night counsel, "My reins (thoughts) also instruct me in," &c. The night seems to be no uncommon time for communications to pass between God and His people. David seems to have had frequent experience of this. "I remembered Thee upon my bed," &c. When the sense of responsibility comes upon a young man and the weight of care is felt, often, though fatigued with the toil of the day, will he at night think seriously and long over his position and its needs. Sometimes he can say, as in *Psa. lxxvii.*, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot sleep," &c. And often his meditations are very gloomy—"Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will He be favourable no more?" And after more of this there comes the telling of the Lord's sympathy, "I said this is mine infirmity, but I will remember," &c. He says again and again, "I will, I will remember, I will meditate." It was difficult, but he was determined. And here he says, "I will thank the Lord, who hath given me counsel." And our blessed Lord had His night conflicts—"He was in all points made like unto His brethren." And "He was heard in that He feared." Let us copy His example—do what He did, and you, too, shall find counsel. (*T. E. Hankinson, M.A.*)

**Ver. 7. My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.**—*Man taking counsel of his reins*:—The ancients regarded the reins, or kidneys, located in a retired part of the body, as the seat of the moral and spiritual sentiments, especially of the intuitional convictions, in distinction from those which have been acquired from philosophy or the experience of others. To be instructed by one's reins is therefore to give heed to the voice of the soul itself. 1. The soul articulates itself in conscience, which gives wiser counsel regarding duty than any "court of casuistry"; in the sense of God, which men cannot divest themselves of, as even Rousseau confesses, "Keep your life such as would lead you to desire that there should be a just God, and you will have no doubt of His existence"; in the vital instinct, which predicts immortality, &c. Infidelity would be impossible if men would take the counsel of their own "reins." In the silent depths of the soul the echoes of God's voice are always sounding. 2. We will hear these echoes best when all is quiet about us—the janglings of the busy day ceased. The soul expands towards the infinite when the narrow arena of earthly competitions disappears, as the stars show themselves when darkness has blotted out the scenes on earth. 3. The best interpreter of the counsel of the reins is the Word of God. It reveals us to ourselves. Of Jesus it was said that "He knew what was in man." Francis Quarles (1644) represents God as saying—

I, that alone am Infinite, can try  
How deep within itself thine heart doth lie;  
Thy seaman's plummet can but reach the ground—  
I find that which thy heart itself ne'er found." (*Homiletic Review.*)

**Ver. 8. I have set the Lord always before me.**—*Facing God*:—Convictions are of two kinds. They are born of emergencies and experience. The former are instinctive, springing into life full grown. The latter mature slowly. A ship strikes a rock and begins to sink. The conviction of danger, and of possible destruction, takes shape at once in the minds of all on board. This is the conviction of emergency. But the conviction of a man's worth must come by experience, and must wait long for its maturity. Belief is not conviction, but only its germ. Conviction is faith in fruition, which takes time. The text is the utterance of such conviction, and it is the keynote of the whole Psalm. I. IT IS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE WHAT THAT IS WHICH IS CONTINUALLY BEFORE US. That which is constantly in a man's eye must help very largely to shape him. I have heard a very significant criticism on a certain picture, to the effect that, though it was a good piece of artistic work, it was not a good picture to live with. You would not wish to have

hanging up in your sitting-room, and constantly in sight of your children, a picture of Herodias with the head of John the Baptist, or of a crazed mother in the act of murdering her babe. You try to keep pictures of wholesome subjects as well as of beautiful forms before your children's eyes; because you know that they are insensibly educated by familiarity with such things. In an age of few books, men and women learned mostly by the eye. It was not wholly nor mostly idolatry which filled the old churches up with pictures. The visitor to St. Mark's, in Venice, may follow for himself the footsteps of the earlier catechumen; passing into the Christian temple through a vestibule of Old Testament history wrought in mosaic pictures, and then reading on the walls and domes within the truths of crucifixion, resurrection, the baptism of the Spirit, and the coming of the Lord to judgment,—all arranged in the order of Christian thought. The peasant who passed over the old wooden bridge over the torrent at Lucerne had daily before him, in the painted compartments of the bridge, a reminder of that other stream which all must cross sooner or later. Nature sets her mark on character. If her surroundings are gloomy and savage, they impart a sombre tone to the men who live among them. Men tend to be narrowed or broadened by their daily task. The man who has columns of figures for ever before him may easily degenerate into a mere calculating machine. If the thing which is constantly before us is larger and better than ourselves, its hourly presence rebukes our littleness and our badness, and works to assimilate us to itself. If it is worse than ourselves it draws downward. There was philosophy as well as enthusiasm in the apostle's exhortation to run, looking unto Jesus, and in Paul keeping his eye on the prize of his high calling, and reaching forth to that which is before. II. BUT IT MAY BE ASKED, IS NOT GOD ALWAYS BEFORE US? Can we help its being so? Assuredly we can. David does not say, "The Lord is always," &c.; but, "I have set Him always," &c. His own will and act have had something to do with the matter. He has been at pains to bring God into the foreground, and to keep Him there. Because God is ever manifesting Himself, because every common bush is afire with Him, it does not follow that men recognise the fact. They do not. There is abundance of sweet music, but there are multitudes of people to whom it means no more than the rumble of the carts in the streets. III. THUS, THEN, GOD WILL NOT BE IN ANY TRUE SENSE BEFORE OUR FACE UNLESS WE SET HIM THERE. It needs special training, determination, and practice. There is a spiritual inertia to be overcome, and a perverse tendency. The bar of steel does not point naturally to the pole, but anywhere. It must be acted on from without, must have magnetic virtue imparted to it. And persistency is needed. I have set the Lord "always" before me. It was not enough that once or twice God was in the line of vision, He was to be kept there. A compass needle would be to a sailor of no more account than a knitting needle, if only by some shock it were made to point northwards. It is the fact of its always pointing there that gives it its value. And it is this fact of persistence which gives value to David's saying. When a man has shut himself up to one thing as the source and strength of his happiness he will find out a great deal about that one thing. Thus did Robinson Crusoe, when he found out that he should have to live on his island. And so is it with men and God. IV. MANY ARE THE DISCOVERIES WHICH THE MAN WHO SETS THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE HIM WILL MAKE. 1. He finds Him self-revealed. In the Shinto temples in Japan the shrines contain no altars, pulpits, or pictures, but only a circular steel mirror. What it means is not known. But it would be an appropriate symbol for a Christian shrine. James draws a picture of a man beholding his natural face in a glass. The man who studies God studies self at the same time. 2. It carries with it a power of growth. For God is ever going before us and beckoning us on. A mountain is a constant temptation to climb, and when we find yet higher summits beyond we want to climb them also. And so is it in learning of God. 3. It engenders hope. Amid the darkness and vagueness of the Old Testament future, this Psalm is like a sweet flute note amid the crash and discord of a vast orchestra. I know of nothing more soothing than these verses. "I shall not be moved"; all is well, "because He is at my right hand." (*Marvin Vincent, D.D.*) *The earthly and heavenly forms of companionship with God:*—Now, the two expressions, "before me" and "in Thy presence," are substantially synonymous and convertible. Notice the other clause. "He is at my right hand." "At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." God before my face, and I before God's face; God at my right hand, and I glad at His. I. IF WE TURN OUR FACES TO GOD HERE HIS FACE WILL SHINE ON US YONDER. "I have set the Lord always before my eyes." "Before Thy face is fulness of joy." The one is the summing up of the devout man's life on earth. What can the other



be but the prophecy of the devout man's life in heaven? Observe how for us, here and now, circumstanced and occupied and distracted as we are, that clear consciousness of God's presence will inevitably fade and shatter unless we are careful to preserve it. "I have set the Lord,"—that implies a great deal of definite effort, of fixed will, of stern resistance to and rejection of hindrances and things that come between. God's presence cannot be proved. The consciousness of it depends upon our whole nature. It is what people call a moral thing; and it rises and falls like a sensitive thermometer, if a cloud comes between the bulb and the sun. You can crowd Him out of your minds by plunging yourselves fiercely into your daily duties, however sacred and elevated these may be. No more than the sunshine can be flashed back from a tarnished steel mirror, can the consciousness of God's presence live in an impure soul. And the heart must be kept still, free from agitation, from the storms of passion and the tyranny of eager desires. A catpaw that ruffles the surface of the lake shatters the image; and unless our hearts are quieted from earth they will never mirror heaven. "Walk thou before Me, and be perfect," is at once a commandment and a promise. And they only are wise who answer, "I will walk before the Lord in the land, and the light of the living." As I have already said, this thrilling and continual consciousness of the Divine presence is the surest basis for the expectation of immortal life. It is too precious to die; it is too great and pure and noble to have anything to fear from the accident of corporal death. So we come to consider that higher form of the Divine presence which is suggested by the contrast in my second text. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." But that presence is not secured by the individual's efforts, but is poured upon him in its effulgence from the throne itself. If I try to keep God in sight here, yonder He reveals Himself in all His greatness. We are not to understand that that future vision which is all expressed in these words of my second text—"before Thee"—consists in any measure which is analogous to the sight of the body. Nor are we, I suppose, to understand that then, any more than now, we are able to comprehend the incomprehensible and infinite. "The face of God" is the Scriptural expression for that side of the Divine nature which is capable of being manifested by Him, and apprehended by us; and Jesus Christ is the face of God. Yonder it is that we shall see Him as He is; and yonder it is the Christ whom, having not seen we "love," and whom seeing we shall see the Father. There will be, as I suppose, new and unimaginable modes of manifestation, about which the less that we say the wiser we are. For if our experience here on earth teaches us anything, it teaches us that the body shuts us off from as much as it brings us into contact with; and that our senses are but like little slits in some grim old fortress, only wide enough to let in the requisite light and air, and that beyond their limits in both directions there are notes of which the vibrations are too numerous, or too few, in a given time to be apprehended by our ears; and rays in the spectrum at either end, which the human eye cannot see. So that, with new modes of manifestation and new capacities of apprehension, we shall draw nearer and nearer to the sun that we beheld here shining through the mists and the clouds. If we, amidst the shows and gauds of time and the crowds of thronging men and the distractions of our daily occupations, steadfastly seek and see the Lord, and have beams coming from Him, as a light shining in a dark place, He will lift us yonder, and turn the whole benediction of the sunlight of His face upon us, and, saturated with the brightness, we shall walk in the light of His countenance and be amongst the people of the blessed.

II. IF WE KEEP THE LORD AT OUR RIGHT HAND HE WILL SET US AT HIS RIGHT HAND. The emblem of the "right hand" has a double meaning in Scripture, one part of which applies more to our present and the other to our future. When we speak of having at our right hand any one, we mean as counsellor, companion, strengthener, ally; as fellow-fighter, guide, and defender. And it is in that capacity that we have to set the Lord at our right hand. If we have Him by our sides we are never alone. I suppose that the saddest fate for a man is to live solitary. I suppose that we mortal millions live alone after all companionship; like islands in a waste of ocean, with no communications. Ah! How many of us have known what it is for the one that stood at our right hand to vanish, to change. If we live so companioned, counselled, championed, by a God made present, not by His omnipresence but by our consciousness of it, then be sure of this, that the time will come when He who came to earth, as it were, and stood at our right hand, will lift us to the heavens, and plant us at His. I at His right hand. What does that mean? Let me quote you two or three plain words. "The sheep at His right hand; the goats at His left." It means that. It means favour, acceptance in that great day of account. "And he called his name

Benjamin :—the son of his right hand." It means that; paternal love, a yearning heart, a longing to pour all a Father's blessing on the child. And it means that the man, thus acquitted and taken to the Father's heart, is distinguished and honoured—"grant that these, my two sons, may sit, the one at Thy right hand, the other at Thy left." Nor must we forget that there is still a loftier conception attached to this emblem of "the right hand," which was not within the horizon of the Psalmist, but is within ours. Jesus Christ our Brother has been exalted to that session at God's right hand, which indicates indisturbance, completed work, royalty and power. And He hath said, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also." So if He is at my right hand, as champion, I shall be at His right hand and share in His dominion. III. IF WE STAY OURSELVES ON GOD, AMIDST STRUGGLE AND CHANGE HERE, HE WILL GLADDEN US YONDER WITH PERPETUAL JOYS. "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." A very humble result to be accomplished by so great a thing as the actual presence of God at a man's side. Only this, that I will be able to keep my place, and stand steadfast. And there is only one thing that will make us steadfast, and that is that we should be, if I might use such a figure, bolted and lashed on to, or rather incorporated into, the changeless steadfastness of the unmoved God. God comes to us here, and is sword and shield; yonder He will be palm and crown. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." Every faculty and capacity will be satisfied, every yearning met, and nothing left to desire but the continuance which is guaranteed, and the increase as capacity increases, which is as certain. Here there is always something lacking; yonder there is fulness of joy and no satiety. "Pleasures for evermore"—both because there is an uninterrupted succession of such—like the ripples upon a sunlit sea, that all day long come rolling to the beach and break in music and sparkles of light; and because each pleasure is in itself perpetual, seeing that there is no possibility of these delights becoming stale and common. Thus begin with realising the Divine presence. We must begin all this on earth. The seed of heaven is sown in the furrows of this world. Philosophers talk to us about the law of continuity. That applies in regard to the life here and the life hereafter. If you ever are to come into the blessedness of the life yonder, you must begin with the life of faith in Jesus Christ here and now. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *God as a dominant idea*.—Dissipation is the parent of mediocrity. Because there is neither government nor concentration nor dominant idea in men's lives, they never do much, never grow any size. The subject before us is self-government by means of a dominant idea. A dominant idea is an idea which mixes itself with all other ideas, giving them its own colour and character; so that you cannot take out any thought from a mind in which a dominant idea exists and analyse it, but you shall find traces of this one idea. Constantly we meet with men who have one thought by which they explain everything, and they infect us with a dominant feeling that they are very tiresome. Restraining, ruling ideas spring up naturally. The emotions are the first parents of ideas. Primitive man hears a voice rebuking mere animal desire, which says, "Thou shalt not eat of it," and the moment that voice is heard a moral nature has arisen and heaven becomes possible. The great majority of men allow their lives, as they do their beliefs, to go anyhow. They have never formed a distinct opinion as to the shape their life is to take. It is in our power to choose what idea we shall be ruled by, and, having chosen, it is in our power to make the idea a ruling one. We must determine to associate our idea with all our pleasures and labours; to bring it before our mind every day. And what shall be our dominant idea? The idea of God is our birthright. The idea of God stands upon exactly the same ground as all our other intuitions. Clifford says, "Belief in God and in a future life is a source of refined and elevated pleasure to those who can hold it." Here is the idea ready to our hand. The idea is your birthright, but you have to make it dominant. (*W. Page Roberts, M.A.*) *The practice of the presence of God*.—God always sees us, whether we think of it or not. It makes no difference as to the fact whether we believe it or not. But it makes all the difference to ourselves. It makes just the difference between a godly man and an ungodly man. The truly religious man is he who has formed the habit of living under the influence of the thought of the presence of God. To set the Lord always before us is the secret of good living, is the true preparation for heaven. This is one reason why regular habits of prayer, of worship, of reading God's Word, of Holy Communion are so helpful and cannot safely be neglected. They are means of drawing near to God, of coming into His presence. If we are doing anything, whether work or amusement, in which we could not bear to think of God, we may be sure that work or amusement is wrong. There is a beautiful custom in some

countries. Sacred pictures are placed at intervals by the wayside, among the mountains and woods, in the streets of villages and towns. They are roughly made, badly painted and tinselly, but for all that they are reminders to people of holy thoughts; they are meant to call the mind of the passers-by in the midst of work or amusement to God. And how are we to set Him before us? How are we to think of Him? We may set Him before us in the completeness of His Divine Being—God the Father, the Son, the Spirit. Try to form the habit of setting the Lord always before you; for if He is at your right hand you shall never fall. Always in earnest prayer at the beginning of every day. Always when things go well with you, and in trouble, turning to Him as the one trusted help and refuge. (*J. E. Vernon, M.A.*)

*The setting of the Lord before us*:—This and the following verses are quoted by Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. 1. Those who set the Lord always before them have an habitual impression of His all-seeing eye and immediate presence. David, we know, had this habitual impression. He was aware how highly important to him was this near presence of the Almighty, and what a beneficial influence it shed over all his prospects. 2. It implies an habitual regard to the Lord's will as the rule of our actions. Faithful Christians must make it their constant study to ascertain what is the will of God respecting themselves, and then set this will before them as the rule of their life. It should not only be a consideration with them, but their chief consideration. Those who make the will of God their rule cannot err. They look at it as sailors to the pole star, in order that they may direct their course thereby. 3. It implies making the Lord's glory the end of all our aims. The glory of the Lord is that one object of surpassing importance which absorbs all other considerations. To set the Lord always before us is to keep this end always in view. 4. It implies making Him the object of our trust and dependence in all circumstances. 1. The practice of setting the Lord always before us is a bright evidence of the sincerity of our faith. Faith is a living and abiding principle, constantly in operation. Faith is that principle within the man which realises and embodies everything which is spiritual. 2. A constant sense of the presence of God is a sure means of counteracting the influence of the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. 3. A sense of the Lord's constant presence would be a spur to our diligence and activity in endeavouring to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. A persuasion that the eye of the Lord is in every place, beholding the evil and the good, would have a wonderful effect in exciting the runners of the Christian race to put forth their utmost powers to strain every nerve, that they may come in first to the goal. Now see a few lights in which you should make it your habit to set the Lord always before you—(1) You are directed to set before yourselves the Lord as your chief good, the highest object of your aims. (2) We are to look upon God, in Christ, as our owner. God possesses a right over us as our Maker and Preserver. (3) We are to set the Lord Jesus before us as a Judge. We should not merely give a general assent to the truth of the judgment which will hereafter take place, and that Christ will occupy the throne then, but we are to consider Him as seated now upon the tribunal, and taking cognisance of all our transactions. (*T. Chambers, M.A.*)

*Things that intercept the Divine presence*:—There are three things that, taken together, build up for us a very thick triple wall between us and God. There is sense, and all that it reveals to us; there are duties, necessary, possibly blessed, but actually often disturbing and limiting; and the thickest and most opaque of the three screens, there are the sins which dim our capacity, and check our inclination of realising the Divine presence. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*Thought must concentrate itself upon God*:—That needs that we shall shut out a great deal besides, as a man that wants to see something on the horizon will hold his palm above his eyes to exclude nearer objects and the glare that dazzles. It needs that we shall resolutely concentrate our thoughts upon Him. We have to be ignorant of a great deal if we would know any of the sciences, or of the practical arts. And we have to shear off not less if we would know the best knowledge, and be experts in the highest art in life. (*Ibid.*)

*God near and yet afar*:—There may as well be no God, as far as a great many of us are concerned, in the most important matters of our lives, as a God that we never think about. He is not far from "every one of us"; but we may be very far from Him, and we are very far from Him unless by effort we set Him before us. (*Ibid.*)

*The stability of the good man*:—The presumptuous man in one of the Psalms speaks thus: "In my prosperity I said, I shall not be moved." But when prosperity fled self-confidence fled with it, and at length he learned to say, as he goes on to tell us, "by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled." Ah! think of the instability of our resolutions,



think of the fluctuations of our thoughts, think of the surges of our emotions, think of the changes that by subtle degrees pass over us all, so as that the old man's grey hair and bowed form is less unlike his childish buoyancy and clustering ringlets than are his senile thoughts and memories to his juvenile expectations. And think of the forces that are brought to bear upon us, the shocks of calamity and sorrow by which we are beaten and battered, the blasts of temptation by which we are sometimes all but overthrown, the floods that come and beat upon our house. (*Ibid.*) *Steadfastness*:—That steadfastness will come to us by the actual communication of strength, and it will come to us because in the consciousness of the Divine presence there lies a charm that takes the glamour out of temptation and the pain out of all wounds. He being with us, the dazzling, treacherous brilliancies of earth cease to dazzle and betray. He being with us, sorrow itself and pain and all the ills that flesh is heir to have little power to shake the soul. (*Ibid.*) *Pleasure for evermore*:—That presence which amidst strife, warfare, weakness, and mutability manifested itself in its gift of steadfastness will then, amidst the tranquillity of heaven, manifest itself in a joy unlike all earthly joy, in that it is full; and yet more unlike, if I may say so, all earthly joy in that it is perpetual. Here there is ever something lacking in all our gladness, some guest at the table that sulks and will not partake and rejoice, some unlit window in the illumination, some limitation in the gladness; yonder it shall be full. "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness." Here, thank God! we have brooks by the way; there we shall stoop down and drink from the fountain, the ocean of joy. And the gladness is perpetual, in that, having nothing to do with physical causes or externals, there is no cause of change and no certainty of reaction. (*Ibid.*) *The habitual recognition of God*:—If we observe the pursuits of men of the world we see how they set their object, be it what it may, always before them. Success cannot be had without this. The same necessity exists in religion. If we would desire any real help now, and promised blessings hereafter, God must be to us ever present. Such piety is attended with God's constant protection and friendship.

**I. WHAT IT IS TO SET THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE US.** It is to maintain a supreme and habitual regard for God, according to the relations which He sustains towards us. In the world, if a man has fixed his supreme regard on wealth, though he may often think and talk on other subjects, yet he never forgets this one. Let anything occur that will affect it, and you will always find that his object is before him. Now, it is in the same way that we set the Lord always before us. We shall always regard Him as infinitely perfect—as our Lawgiver and Sovereign; as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; as our Redeemer and Sanctifier; as a covenant God; as our Judge and Rewarder. Now, so to habitually regard God as to secure the practical influence of all these perfections and relations of God upon us is to set the Lord always before us.

**II. THE ADVANTAGE OF SO DOING.**

1. In the daily business of our life—to keep us diligent, just in our dealings, and honest in all our transactions.
2. In the more unimportant and ordinary occurrences of life—to keep us faithful in life's little things, contented, cheerful, patient, devout.
3. In temptation we shall not be moved. It guards the heart against the world and Satan.
4. In holy obedience we shall be steadfast therein.
5. Preparation for all the scenes of life, for death and heaven. In prosperity he will remember God; in adversity he will trust God; in death he will be without fear; in the judgment day he will have confidence. And we can thus set God always before us. Is it safe or wise ever to forget Him? Do we thus set God always before us? What will they do from whose thoughts God is habitually excluded, when He shall be revealed in the clear light of eternity? (*M. W. Taylor, D.D.*)

*Our great Example*:—The terms of this portion of the Psalm show distinctly that it is prophetic of the Messiah.

**I. THE FIRST PREDICTION IS THAT CHRIST, WHEN HE SHOULD COME, WOULD "SET JEHOVAH CONTINUALLY BEFORE HIM,"** *i.e.* He would live on earth realising by faith the presence of an unseen God, to dwell continually in His sight. Our Lord did this. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."

**II. JEHOVAH WOULD BE AT HIS RIGHT HAND.** We find our Lord continually sustaining Himself by the consoling presence of His Father. And all who tread in His steps may share in His consolation.

**III. HIS HEART WOULD BE GLAD.** How could He be otherwise, when He knew the resources of the Father? Our Lord walked with God on earth, rejoicing in hope of the glory that should be revealed. So also may we, and do we?

**IV. HIS FLESH SHOULD REST IN HOPE.** This implies—

1. His death. His death was predicted no less than His triumph. He looked forward to His death, and repeatedly foretold it. And He resolutely met it. Let us ask for grace to enter into His spirit.
2. The limitation of death's dominion.

"I have power," said He, "to lay it (My life) down, and I have power to take it again." "I lay it down of Myself." He did as He had said. He took again that dishonoured body, to be dishonoured no more. V. GOD WOULD GUIDE HIM TO THE PATH OF LIFE. "Thou wilt show Me," &c. The way of the grave did not seem the gate of life, but in reality it was so. Conclusion: He will bring us there. Decide for Him now. Sympathise with Him in His glory. (*Baptist W. Noel.*) *The habitual thought of God*:—David could only do this mentally. "No man hath seen God at any time." And when he says "always" he does not mean that he was always actually thinking of Him. We cannot do this. We are not to be slothful in business. Yet David means that he believed and felt God to be near him, and that he would frequently hold communion with God. This leads to a state of mind in which we can readily recur to God in our thoughts. Let us do this, setting the Lord always before us. I. AS OUR PROTECTOR. Our religious course is a constant warfare. We need the courage which only the presence of the Lord can impart. II. AS OUR LEADER. III. AS OUR EXAMPLE. IV. AS OUR OBSERVER. Nothing escapes His notice. A heathen philosopher admonished his disciples to imagine that the eye of some illustrious personage was always upon them. But what is the eye of Plato to that of God? What stimulus this to zeal. (*William Jay.*) *On habitual remembrance of God*:—Our text directs our thoughts to the greatest of all Beings, the source of all happiness. I. WHAT IT IS TO SET GOD ALWAYS BEFORE US. Represent to yourself the proceedings of men, who have proposed to themselves as their main pursuit the possession of some worldly attainment. Observe in what manner they set their object, be it what it may, always before their eyes. Contemplate the votary of science. Behold him absorbed in laborious researches: in the investigation of causes and effects; in the construction of theories, and the explanation of the phenomena of nature. Behold him day after day bending all the powers of his mind to the invention and application of mechanism; to the arrangement and superintendence of experiments; to the development and illustration of philosophical truth. At home and abroad, in cities and in the fields, in solitude and in society, behold him steadily bearing in mind the object to which he has dedicated his life. Survey the votary of ambition. Behold every nerve, every faculty, upon the stretch to supplant, to undermine, or to surpass his rivals, and to attain the dizzy pre-eminence to which he aspires. Receive then a lesson from the children of this world (Luke xvi. 8). Then wilt thou discern what it is to set the Lord thy God always before thee. II. THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERS UNDER WHICH IT IS OUR DUTY TO DO THIS. 1. Regard Him as Creator. If you deem life a blessing, remember Him—2. As your Preserver. 3. As your Redeemer and Sanctifier. 4. As your Sovereign and your Judge. See then that you obey Him, lest you be destroyed for ever. III. GIVE EXAMPLES OF THE DUTY OF THUS SETTING THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE YOU. 1. In prosperity—by being grateful to Him. 2. In adversity, sickness, and death—by trusting Him, submitting to Him patiently, remembering how little your sufferings in comparison with your sins. Look up to Him and be comforted. 3. In youth—by not withholding from the planter the prime of the fruit. When wilt thou serve thy God if not now? 4. In age—by remembering that the night cometh; work, while it is called to-day; seek mercy while yet it may be found. 5. Under all circumstances, in common duties, as well as in specially religious acts. If you are cultivating your farm; if you are selling your articles in the market or in a shop; if you are serving a master in your daily labour; if you are managing the concerns of your friend or of your country: remember that God is contemplating all your motives, all your thoughts, all your words, all your actions; and that for all your motives and thoughts and words and actions you will have to render an account at the judgment seat of Christ (Rev. xx. 12). IV. THE RECOMPENSE. The Lord is at their right hand; they shall not be moved (1 Sam. ii. 30; John xiv. 23). (*T. Gisborne, M.A.*) *The secret of a happy life*:—In the preceding verses we read, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have," &c. The speaker, therefore, is a very contented and happy man. How is it that he is able to feel so happy? Let us seek out the way. Perhaps his road may fit our feet. But who is the person who is thus singularly content? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who by the Spirit here speaks. All this is so much the more encouraging to us because if He, the "Man of Sorrows," was nevertheless able to possess so sweet content, it must be possible for us, whose lot is not so bitter. We are not sent to make atonement for sin, and hence our sorrows are few compared with our Lord's. Our text clearly imparts to us the secret of this peace. It is—I. LIVING IN THE

LORD'S PRESENCE ALWAYS. "I have set . . . always before me." Now, this means—1. That we should make the Lord's presence the greatest of all facts to us. Jesus did so. He saw God everywhere. From morning to evening, until you fall asleep "as in the embraces of your God," see Him everywhere. This is happy living. 2. The making of God's glory the one object of our lives. 3. So to live that the presence of God shall be the rule and support of our obedience. So Jesus did. The Master's eye is to many servants most important, to make them careful and diligent. For many are eye-servers and men-pleasers. But how should we live if God were seen looking on? He is looking on. 4. As the source from which we are to derive solace and comfort under every trial. This it was that made Him suffer and never complain. 5. That we are to hold perpetual communion with God. He was always in converse with the Father, and He could say, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always." 6. We must follow this life, because of our delight and joy in it. Such a life cannot be lived in any other manner. If you find walking with God dull, then you have not the first essentials of such a life. You must be born again. If you are the Lord's you will delight in living near to Him. You may lose your roll, like Christian in the arbour, and you may go back again and find it, but it is very hard going back over the same ground. The hardest part of the road to heaven is that which has to be traversed three times: once when you go over it at first, a second time when you have to return with weeping to find your lost evidences, and then again when you have to make up for lost time. Abiding with God creates peace like a river. II. TRUSTING ALWAYS IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE. "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." 1. With any regret or remorse as to the past. Christ had many sorrows but no regrets. 2. From our consistency in the way of true religion. 3. With terror. 4. By temptation, so as to be swept into surprising sin. 5. So as to fail at last. Conclusion: 1. You who are not Christians, you are not happy. Set the Lord before you. 2. You who are not Christians, but think yourselves happy. How frail the pillar on which your happiness rests. 3. You Christians who are not happy; here is counsel for you. 4. You happy Christians, you can be happier still by coming nearer to God. This is heaven below. (C. H. Spurgeon.) **Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.**—*The faithful heart, and the present God*:—This Psalm touches the high-water mark of the religious life in two aspects—its ardent devotion, and its clear certainty of eternal blessedness beyond the grave. These two are connected as cause and effect. I. THE EFFORT OF FAITH. "I have set the Lord always before me." It took a dead lift of conscious effort for the Psalmist to keep himself continually in touch with that unseen God. This is the very essence of true religion. Mark how the Psalmist came to this effort. It was because his whole soul clung to God, with the intelligent and reasonable conviction and apprehension that in God alone was all he needed. If a man does not think about God and His love it is all one as if he had not Him and it. II. THE ALLY OF FAITH. The second portion of the text is to be interpreted as the consequence of the effort. "He is at my right hand." The Psalmist means that by the turning of his thoughts to God and the effort he makes—the effort of faith, imagination, love, and desire—to bring himself as close as he can to the great heart of the Father, he realises that presence at his side in an altogether different manner from that in which it is given to stones and rocks and birds and beasts and godless men. That Divine Presence is the source of all strength and blessedness. "At my right hand"; then I stand at His left, and close under the arm that carries the shield; and close by my instrument of activity, to direct my work; my Protector, my Ally, my Director. III. THE COURAGEOUS STABILITY OF FAITH. "Not be moved." That is true all round, in regard of all the things which may move and shake a man. The secret of a quiet heart is to keep ever near God. We shall not be moved by circumstances. How quietly we may live above the storms if we only live in God. The Psalmist feels that the great change from life to death will not move him, in so far as his union with God is concerned. A realisation of true communion with God is the guarantee that the man who has it shall never die. (A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Vers. 9, 10. **Therefore my heart is glad.**—*Christ joyful in suffering*:—The remainder of this Psalm we are to consider as spoken by David in reference to the Messiah, of whom he was both a prophet and a type. I. THIS PASSAGE REMINDS US OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. Old Testament types, promises, and predictions describe Christ as a suffering Saviour. The view of Him thus given through the medium of prophecy is completely realised in His actual history. Well may such



an emphasis be laid on the sufferings and death of Christ; for this was the instituted method of redemption. II. THIS PASSAGE AFFIRMS THE CONSTANCY AND CHEERFULNESS WITH WHICH CHRIST WAS TO BEAR HIS SORROWS. "My heart is glad, and my glory," that is, my tongue, "rejoiceth." So said David, personating the Messiah; and all this was realised in Messiah's actual deportment. Remarkable was the constancy and cheerfulness with which our blessed Saviour bore His sufferings. And we cannot but admire the character in which this excellence was so conspicuously displayed. To our admiration of His unequalled magnanimity we must add the more valuable tribute of our gratitude; for it was in love to our souls that His engagement to suffer and to die had its origin. If we ought to love Him, because He so loved us, oh how deep-seated should our affection be! III. WHAT WAS IT SUPPORTED AND CHEERED OUR SAVIOUR IN THE MIDST OF HIS SUFFERINGS? 1. He "set the Lord always before Him," as the great object of His regard. 2. He was cheered by the assurance that "God was at His right hand." The arm of Jehovah was stretched out for His stay and deliverance. 3. He was supported by the hope of a resurrection of life and blessedness. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) **My flesh also shall rest in hope.**—*Dying well and comfortably*:—Doctrine: That it is a sweet, desirable, and Christlike way of dying, to be inwardly willing and joyful, and outwardly triumphing and praising God, from a confidence and hope of His promises. I. GROUNDS OF COMFORT. 1. Your God will be with you, and at your right hand, that you shall not be moved. 2. Death is your friend, to bring you to rest. Jesus has, by His death, removed everything from your death that is legally penal and a curse. 3. You shall be raised again to everlasting glory and happiness. 4. Your Lord after the judgment will present you faultless before the presence of His glory. II. THE FOUNDATIONS UPON WHICH THESE CONSOLATIONS AGAINST DEATH ARE BUILT. 1. The Psalmist looks to the acts of Christ's mediation as the foundation of all His consolations against death. 2. These consolations are certain in themselves, and to you, from the promises of the covenant of grace, and are founded on them. III. YOU MUST DO YOUR PART, THAT YOU MAY BE COMFORTED, REJOICE AND TRIUMPH WHEN YOU COME TO DIE. 1. You must have faith to believe these reasons of comfort. 2. You must have a lively hope in exercise. What must you do?—(1) Come speedily out of a state of nature into a state of grace. (2) Impartially and accurately examine your state, whether in Christ or not. (3) Live a life of faith. (4) Keep your consciences pure and void of offence, both towards God and man, and labour to be holy in your lives and conversations. (5) Be much in the exercise of love. (6) Live with your hearts weaned from a present world. (7) Carry well towards the Spirit of joy and comfort, and keep communion with Him. He is the Comforter. (8) Be frequent in actual preparation for death—promises ready, evidences ready, experiences ready. (*James Robe, M.A.*) *Immortality*:—This is an idea which has been growing in the Old Testament. Now and again some word has been interjected into the story that did not seem to belong to it, or was of another quality—a word with a colour, a flush, as if light from an unknown source had struck upon it and lighted it up into new beauty. Job had said one or two words for the explanation of which we must wait; the Psalmist now speaks of his flesh resting in hope, of his soul not being left in an unseen place, and of the Holy One not seeing corruption. . . . To impair the doctrine of immortality is to strike at the goodness of God. In denying immortality we may be said to deny the Creator. We cannot treat immortality as a doctrine only; it is really part of the Divine nature. Given God, and immortality in some form is a necessity. Has He created us simply to let us die? Has He given us all these gifts merely to mock us at the last, by allowing us to drop into oblivion and nothingness? Does He permit us to climb to the very door of heaven, and to hear the songs that are sung inside, simply that He may thunder to us—You cannot have part or lot in this inheritance; your destiny is obliteration? Some argument must be founded upon instinct, impulse, yearning, longing, speechless unconsciousness. When we are all, body, soul, and spirit, lifting ourselves up to Him, is it like Him to deny the aspiration? Or like Him to give us that further movement which will connect us consciously with His own eternity? To this latter faith I incline. God has not created aspiration which He cannot satisfy. There is more in us than we can tell, and to these wordless impulses God sends this revelation of immortality. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The flesh and its three states*:—We would speak on the fortunes of the flesh in its three stages of existence. I. ON THIS SIDE THE GRAVE. Note the word "also." It carries our thought back to the higher joy of the soul. Neither the essence of sin nor of glory is in the flesh

at all. We therefore do not exclude the soul, but rather make it the great centre of all, though we speak more of the flesh. The Redeemer shall satisfy our whole nature. There is no danger, ordinarily, of our forgetting the flesh. It makes its presence predominant enough. Nothing but the regenerated spirit can keep it under. How we admire the heroic deeds of those who in some holy struggle for liberty or for love assert the superiority of the spirit over the flesh. They can die, die in torture, and that gladly, by the power of the spirit within them. But yet the Gospel does not forget even the flesh. How all the natural feelings are deeply touched. This is an argument for the after life of the body. How close is the link between the soul and the body. How they act and react on one another. It, therefore, can never be a matter of indifference to the soul what becomes of the body. And our Lord became flesh, was incarnate, and He has taken it, now glorified, permanently into union with His Godhead. We have no hint that He will ever put it off. It is the same human body which was nursed at the heart of an earthly mother, and which hung upon the Cross in death. Therefore, how can we despise the body? And the hope of the flesh is bound up even with the glory of God Himself. For He did not, at first, mean those bodies to die. There was no death in His counsels. That came by sin. Thus the Divine will was contradicted by Satan. But redemption was to undo Satan's work. Yes, each one may cry out in joy, "My flesh also shall rest in hope." II. IN THE GRAVE. It is a state of rest. The word implies both labours past and repose present. Hence "sleep" is the condition in which faith loves to regard the body in the grave. And like as in sleep, the body in the grave is free from pain and toil, from sin and suffering, from want and weariness and all pining. And it is a state of unconsciousness, so far as the flesh is concerned, an unconsciousness of the very state in which it lies. The resurrection will appear to follow instantaneously upon death, as our awaking after deep sleep seems to follow close upon our falling asleep. And like sleep, it is but for a while; there will be an awakening. The principle of life is held in abeyance: in sleep, by a natural change; in death, by the immediate will of Him who has all life to give and withhold as He wills. What a holy and loving charm do these thoughts throw around even the decaying flesh: what a light upon the grave.

III. BEYOND THE GRAVE. It is far more easy to realise with something like precision the future glory of the flesh than that of the spirit. And yet even the body's glory is far more than we can conceive, because we have no experience of a body free from the penalties of sin. But we have known, at times, fullness of life, of buoyant vigour, and of such pleasure in movement and living that we have been filled with delight. Imagine that eternal. And add new capacities and powers. (*Edward Garbutt, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell—Christ's descent into hell:*—The afflictions and calamities which fall upon many men in this present state are such that, were it not for the hope which they have in God, their only comfort would be that expectation of death which Job expresses (iii. 17). But true religion affords virtuous and good men a very different prospect; and teaches them to expect, that if God does not think fit to deliver them out of their troubles here, yet even the grave puts not an end to His power of redeeming them. They may look upon death itself, not barely as a putting an end to their present afflictions, but as a passage to a glorious and immortal state. In its real and most proper sense the text is not applicable to the Psalmist himself, but to Him of whom David was both a prophet and a type. The word "hell" now signifies "the state of the damned," but David was not condemned to that place of torment, nor did Jesus descend there. Hell frequently means "the state of the dead" (Psa. lxxxix. ; Prov. xxvii. 20, xxx. 15). In the New Testament it means the same, but at times, also, the place appointed for the punishment of the wicked. But this ambiguity is in our own language only, and not in the original. There the place of torment is always Gehenna. The Scriptures nowhere teach that Christ ever entered the place of the damned. Nor is there any reason why He should. The satisfaction of Christ does not depend on the sameness of His sufferings with ours, but on the good pleasure of God. If He had entered the place of the damned, Christ could not have known the sting of their punishment, the worm that never dies, the endless despair of the favour of God. Some say Christ went there to rescue those who were there. Others say He went in order to triumph over Satan in his own kingdom. But our Lord triumphs over him by converting men from their sins and debaucheries, from their unrighteousness and iniquities, which are the works of the devil; to the practice of virtue, justice, good-

ness, temperance, charity, and truth, which are the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Upon the whole, therefore, there is no sufficient foundation, either in the reason of the thing or in the declarations of Scripture, to suppose that our Lord ever descended at all into the place of torment, into the place appointed for the final punishment of the wicked. But the full meaning of the text is, that our Lord continued in the state of the dead, in the invisible state of departed souls, during the time appointed; but that, it not being possible for Him to be holden of death, He was raised again without seeing corruption. (*Samuel Parker, D.D.*)

*He descended into hell*:—Our Lord had not only a human body, but likewise a human soul. His body was laid in the grave, but His soul departed from the body. What is meant by “descending into hell”? Some say “hell” signifies the place of spirits and eternal woe. Others think it does not signify a place of torment, but the place of departed souls; that unseen world into which the spirits of the dead are received when released from the body. Some suppose that there was a great object in the salvation of mankind, which our Lord wrought in going down to hell, or the place of the departed; that He there preached to the dead. And no doubt His soul’s departing into hell was for our sakes, to carry even there, also, an atonement for us; to carry with Him some inconceivable blessing and benefit for us into that place also. As everything that our Lord underwent for our sakes appears to have been set forth, and typified beforehand, in His law, so also was this descent into hell. Illustration: Scapegoat of the day of atonement. The departure of the soul from the body into the unknown land of spirits is, of itself, so awful a thought, even to the good man, that this article of the creed may be a point of great consolation to him. For a Christian to die, even before the day of judgment, is to be with Christ, and to be released from life as from a burden, and to be in joy. It is the great day of judgment which the Bible is ever setting before us. Yet the little that is told us of the state of our souls before the day of judgment, and immediately when they depart from the body, is of itself very deeply affecting, awful, and concerning. It may be profitable to dwell upon these two, what are called intermediate, states: our condition between death and judgment; the states in which our friends are now, and we shall soon be. When work is done, then is the time for contemplation and reflection; and then, when our labours are all over and we are waiting for our judge to pronounce sentence upon them, we shall no doubt form a far more correct judgment of them than now we do. Even if we had been told nothing of the state of the departed, we might have supposed that to be waiting for the judgment, and to be removed from all things here in which the soul can take delight, must be awful beyond all description. We may see how much of mercy and goodness, and how much benefit to us, may be contained in this one article of the creed, that Christ descended into the place of the dead. By going there Himself, after tasting of the bitterness of death, He seems to say to His faithful followers, “Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers” (Isa. xxvi. 20, 21). It is good for us that we should think often of the spirits of the dead, of “just men made perfect,” of them who are released from the burden of the flesh, and are waiting in awful and blissful silence for the revelation of the great day. By His descent into hell Jesus has sanctified and blessed the place of our souls. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to “Tracts for the Times.”*)

*Our Lord in the intermediate state*:—Stress is laid on the fact that our Lord’s blessed body saw no corruption. It lay not long enough in the grave for that change to have taken place in it which we know to be the lot of all human bodies when they have been any while dead. He had not been dead more than thirty-six hours. There seems a special propriety in its being ordered that the only body which was never stained by sin should also be the only one exempt, though not from the pains, yet from the loathsomeness of death. It was a way of giving the whole world, angels and men, clearly to understand that, although God had laid on Him the punishment due to sinful men, yet He never ceased for a moment to be the only beloved of His Father. 1. This text proves the truth of our Saviour’s human soul and body; proves that He took on Himself, really and truly, the substance of our nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, and lived and died in all respects a man, sin only and sinful infirmity excepted; so also, in the unseen state, He continued to be a man among men. Here is a token and earnest that our merciful God sympathises with our natural care and anxiety as to what shall become both of our friends and ourselves during that awful interval which is to come between death and resurrection. Souls departed and bodies in the grave are within the merciful care of Him who is both God and man. 2. Observe the difference between the language of the Old Testament, even the most evangelical portions of it, where



they speak of the state of the dead, and the language of the blessed Gospel itself relating to the same subject. 3. How happy and comfortable soever the Paradise of the dead may be, it is not a place of final perfection, but a place of waiting for something better; a region not of full enjoyment, but of assured peace and hope. So much is hinted, in that God is thanked and glorified for not leaving our Saviour's soul in that place. Here is something very apt to raise in us high and noble thoughts of that which, in one way or another, we are shamefully used to undervalue—the mortal body of man. 4. What does the prophet teach concerning our Saviour's body? Our Saviour's Person was holy because of His most high Godhead. And the same name, "Holy One," is ascribed to His sacred body as it lay in the grave, three days and three nights, separate from His soul. It was still holy, still united in a mysterious but real manner to the Eternal Word. 5. Seeing that, even in the grave, the Godhead of the Lord Christ still abode with His blessed body, seeing that body was still God's Holy One, it could not be suffered to see corruption. And to whomsoever He has given power to become adopted sons of God He gives something glorious and immortal, a seed of a heavenly life which can never decay. Living or dying, nothing shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, nothing but their own wilful unworthiness. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

*On the descent of our Lord Jesus Christ into hell:—*Doctrine: Our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed and Holy One of God, was deeply humbled by His entrance into, and continuing in, the state of the dead for a time. I. PREMISE SOME THINGS. 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ not only endured, in His last passion, most painful sufferings in His body, but also most grievous torments immediately in His soul. Many great divines understand by the words, "He descended into hell," these soul sufferings of Jesus. 2. The Son of God willingly laid down His life; yielded to the power of death. 3. Though death made a separation of His soul from His body, yet His soul and body retained their union with the Divine nature, subsisting in the Person of the Son of God. II. HOW JESUS WAS HUMBLE BY BEING IN THE STATE OF THE DEAD FOR A TIME. Death exercised its dominion over Him, as far as it could in law. 1. Death continued its power and dominion over Him for a time. 2. While in the state of the dead He was cut off from the comforts of this life. 3. Men took occasion to give Him over for lost, and to judge Him as one totally vanquished by death, and without any help or hope. 4. He was further humbled by His soul entering into heaven as the soul of a dead man. 5. In regard that His blessed body was buried and laid in the grave. 6. In regard that His dead body was in the power of His enemies for a time. III. HOW LONG DID OUR SAVIOUR CONTINUE IN THE STATE OF THE DEAD? Three incomplete days and nights in the territories of death, and land of darkness and forgetfulness. IV. WHY DID THE LORD JESUS CONTINUE IN THE STATE OF THE DEAD FOR A TIME? That He might conquer death and the grave in their own territories. Use for consolation. Against all challenges for guilt from the law and justice of God, from Satan, or your own consciences. Use for exhortation. Labour to have an interest in the death of Christ. (*James Robe, M.A.*) Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.—*The devout heart defying death:—*

I. THE GROUND OF THIS TRIUMPHANT CONFIDENCE. The text begins with a "therefore," and that sends us back to what has preceded. The realisation by faith of the presence of God, and of the calm blessedness and stability of continual communion with Him. The religious experiences of the devout life are of such a nature as to bring with them the calm, sweet assurance of their own immortality. The capacity for communion with God surely bears witness that the man who has it is not born for death. Though we have the objective proof of a future life, in the fact of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and though that historical fact is the illuminating fact which brings life and immortality to light, there is needed for the conversion of intellectual belief into living confidence the witness of our own personal enjoyment of God and His sweetness, here and now, which will bring to us, as nothing else will, the calm assurance wherein our hearts may be glad, our spirits may rejoice, and our very flesh may rest safely. If you would be sure of a blessed future, make sure of a God-filled present. II. THE CONTENTS OF THE PSALMIST'S TRIUMPHANT CONFIDENCE. The expression "leave in" should be "leave to"; it does not express the notion of a permission to descend for a time into Sheol, then to be recalled thence, but it expresses the idea of not being delivered at all to the power of that dark world. The Psalmist is not thinking about any resurrection of the body, but is thinking that for him, by reason of his communion with God, death has really been abolished and become non-existent. The threatening shadow

is swept clean out of his path. Could any man, knowing the facts of human life, ever cherish such an expectation as that? The answer is to be found in distinguishing between essence and form. The essence of the Psalmist's conviction was, that his communion with God was unbroken and unbreakable, and in the light of that great hope the grim figure that stood before him thinned itself away to a film, through which the hope shone like a star through the cloud. Whatsoever may have been the obscurity that lay over his conceptions of his own future, this was clear to him,—and this was the all-sufficient thing,—that the content, the stability, the immobility which he enjoyed in his communion with God had nothing in them that death could touch, and would run on unbroken for evermore. The text does not contemplate resurrection as an article of belief, but resurrection is a logical result of the Psalmist's way of thinking. For, says he, "My flesh also shall rest secure." The over-strained spiritualism which pays no attention to the body, except as the clog and prison-house of the soul, has no footing in Scripture representations. The perfection of humanity is to be found in the rising up of a perfected spirit, and the investing of it with a body of glory,—its fitting instrument, its joyous friend. Turn to the positive side of this triumphant confidence. "Thou wilt show me the path of life." That means a road which is life all the way along, and leads to a more perfect and ultimate form thereof. The Psalmist is sure that when the path dips down into any valley of the shadow of death it is still a path to life. Mark the other portions of this triumphant positive confidence. Communion of earth, imperfect as it is, yields analogies, by the heightening and purifying of which we may construct for ourselves some dim, indeed, but reliable, visions of the blessedness of heaven. The enlargement and perfecting of this earthly experience is to be looked for in two directions. "The fulness of joy" is "in Thy presence." And "at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

III. THE FULFILMENT OF THIS TRIUMPHANT CONFIDENCE. The Psalmist died. The essence of his hope was fulfilled; the form was not. The words point to an ideal which the Psalmist strained after, and did not realise. In Christ alone was realised, in its completeness, that life of communion which delivers from death. Though there still remains the physical fact, all that makes it "death" is gone for him who trusts in Jesus Christ. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Joy in Christ's resurrection*:—We are warranted in taking this Psalm to ourselves, inasmuch as the first verses of it plainly belong to David as well as to Christ. Every part of the Psalm may be applied to David in some sense, except that one clause in which our Lord only can be meant, "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." See what consolation devout persons had, even under the Old Testament: they did, as it were, keep a kind of Easter beforehand. Observe what use the man after God's own heart made of his nightly pain and sickness. As he lay awake he practised himself in heavenly contemplations. In what he says he could not mean less than this: that he had a fair and reasonable hope of being somehow delivered from the power of death, and made partaker of heavenly joys in the more immediate presence of God. Yet even the greatest of the old fathers only saw through a glass darkly the things which Christians see face to face. Such as desire to offer to God thanksgivings worthy of His Gospel will find it no small help to know that their unworthy thanksgivings are very far from being single and alone. The saints before Christ partake of our devout joy and hope of immortality. 1. See what kind of persons may reasonably hope to persevere in well-doing and in God's favour; namely, those who make it a rule to live always as in God's especial presence. If you want to have a cheerful and rational dependence on your continuance in well-doing, this one thing you must do, you must set God always before you. You must never act as if you were alone in the world. This is the only "assurance" of salvation that can be reasonably depended on by any man in his own case; namely, the sober yet cheerful hope which arises from a pure conscience, from long-continued habits of real piety and goodness. All assurance besides this is more or less fanciful and dangerous. If a man is endeavouring to keep on this safe ground of assurance he may, without presumption, look for the other comforts mentioned in the Psalm. He may indulge in a calm and reverential joy of heart. The Psalmist notices, as another, the greatest of all fruits of holy trust in the Almighty, that it causes our very "flesh," that is, our mortal body, to "rest in hope"; it makes sleep quiet and secure, and it takes out the sting of death. The chiefest of all privileges is to have hope in the grave; hope that through Him, to whom alone these sacred promises belong of right, our souls shall not be left in hell,—in that dark, unknown condition to which, before the coming of Christ, the

name of Hell was usually given. There need not now to be anything forlorn or desolate in our meditations on our departed friends, or on the condition to which we are ourselves approaching. The unseen region where the soul is to lodge is the place where once the Spirit of our Saviour abode, and is therefore under His especial protection, even more than any church or place that is most sacred on earth. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *Christ contemplating His future blessedness* :—We must consider these words as our blessed Master's own words, as much so as though they came from His own lips. They describe the feelings of His human soul while dwelling in a human body in our world. And this gives them a very high interest. We have here some of the outpourings of His soul before His Father. I. THE TITLE HE APPLIES TO HIMSELF. 1. He calls Himself God's "Holy One." It tells how eminently, conspicuously holy He was. 2. His application of this title to Himself shows us that He deemed it an honourable title. He delights in it, more than in anything besides. II. HIS PROSPECT OF HIS RESURRECTION. We learn—1. That our holy Lord was, as we are, made up of both body and soul. He speaks of both: "My soul," and of His body in referring to the "corruption," which it should not see. 2. At His crucifixion these two parts of Him were separated. A real dissolution took place. The flesh and the spirit were rent asunder, and the soul took its flight into what He calls "hell"; that is, some part of the unseen world inhabited by disembodied spirits. The body sank down to the earth, a soulless, forsaken tenement of clay. Thus far we all resemble Him, but now comes something peculiar to Him. 3. His human frame was saved from corruption. The least taint never touched it. We are familiar with death, and therefore the corruption of death does not make us shudder. But if we saw it for the first time we should abhor it, we should look on it as a token of God's disgust with us, a fixed purpose on His part to degrade and punish us to the utmost for our transgressions. 4. The resurrection of Christ consisted mainly in a reunion of His body and soul. It is implied in the words, "Thou wilt show me the path of life." And here comes out that wonderful truth, the eternal manhood of the Divine Saviour. Death made no essential change in Him. He is not a stranger to us. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." Wonderful condescension! III. THE VIEW HE HAD OF HIS HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS. Heaven is meant, we cannot doubt, in the last verse of this Psalm. And we observe—1. How our Lord tells of nothing in it peculiar to Himself. He places Himself on a level with His people. 2. See the nature of this blessedness. It is "joy," and not one only, but "pleasures." 3. And perfect, for it is "fulness of joy." 4. And permanent, "for evermore." 5. And the source of it—God. It is at God's right hand. St. Peter quotes the passage thus: "Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance." 6. We and our blessed Lord shall be sharers together in the same happiness in His kingdom. IV. THE EFFECTS WHICH HIS ANTICIPATION OF THIS BLESSEDNESS PRODUCED IN HIM. 1. Joy, gladness of heart. True, He was the Man of sorrows, but they were not unmingled. Many a gleam of light pierced through the darkness. And His joy burst forth in exultation and praise. Luke (chap. x.) tells us how "He rejoiced in spirit." And He left the world with something like a conqueror's shout. 2. Hope. It reconciled Him to death. It was but as a sleep to Him. (*C. Bradley.*) *Christ's being the Holy One of God* :—Jesus Christ is that Holy One of God, as—1. All the holiness of God is in Him. 2. In the special peculiar relation in which He stands to God. 3. He has more of the holiness of God communicated to Him than all other creatures. 4. The holiness of God is more manifested in and by Him than in any other way. 5. He is set apart in a peculiar manner for the bringing about God's great design of glorifying Himself, in putting an end to sin, and making an elect world of mankind sinners holy. (*James Robe, M.A.*)

Ver. 11. *Thou wilt show me the path of life.*—*The path of life* :—Not merely, that is, the life of the body. This is shown by the pleasure and joy spoken of afterwards, which are to be found in God's presence, and in communion with Him. "Life," in the only true sense, is union with God, and from that springs, of necessity, the idea of immortality. It seems impossible to suppose that David, who here expresses such a fulness of confidence in God, such a living personal relationship to Him, could have dreamed that such a relationship would end with death. In this Psalm, and in the next, there shines forth the bright hope of everlasting life. Why should man question this? Even the heathen struggled to believe that they should abide after death. Would they to whom God had revealed Himself,



and who were bound to Him in a personal covenant, be left in greater darkness? Impossible! The argument which our Lord used with the Sadducees applies here with special force—God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. They to whom God has made Himself known, they who are one with Him, cannot lose that Divine life of which they are made partakers. Immortality (and a resurrection, Psa. xvii. 15) follows from the life of the spirit. And though probably there would be many fluctuations of belief, though the spiritual eye would not always be clear, it seems impossible to doubt, when we read passages such as this, that there were times at least when the hope of life beyond the grave did become distinct and palpable. At the same time, in the utterance of this confident persuasion and hope David was carried beyond himself. (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*) *The two ways:—* (Taken with Prov. xiv. 12.) There is such a thing in this dying world as a “path of life.” This is represented as leading into fellowship with Him, in whose presence there is fulness of joy. “At Thy right hand,” and thither the path leads, “there are pleasures for evermore.” There are two distinct and contrasted ways or lines of life. The one is called “the way of life,” the other is “the way that seemeth right unto a man.” Set the two ways before you, and ask a deliberate choice. The first thing in journeying is to know where you are going. The one is the way of life, because it is a way which can only be traversed by those who live in the full sense of the word. The highest faculty of our nature is that spiritual capacity which enables us to hold communion with God. And also because it is the way in which alone life can be sustained. And further, because it leads to life. Look at the other way. It “seemeth right unto a man.” Only “seemeth.” But it is not what it seems. It is very popular. Everybody takes it. That does not make its character good, or its end desirable. (*W. Hay Aiken, M.A.*) *The desire for life:—*Beyond the fact that this Psalm was written by David, we know nothing of the circumstances of its authorship. It is evidently called forth by some signal display of the Divine goodness. The Psalmist felt round about him the strengthening sense of that protecting power and presence of God which filled his heart with confidence and made his cup to overflow with the wine of joy. I. EVERY TRUE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT MEETS WITH UNIVERSAL RESPONSE. Like as the æsthetic sentiments of mankind, our best feelings of the beautiful in art and music, were given to the Greeks to preserve and develop; so the religious sentiments of mankind, our feelings of the Divine and spiritual, seem to have been the especial care and heritage of the Jewish race. And as our feelings of beauty are eternal, so that Greek art and poetry will never be unappreciated, so are our intuitions of righteousness, our yearnings for the Divine eternal, and hence the Bible will never die, its perennial fountain will never dry up. II. LIFE IS UNIVERSALLY DESIRED. Else why the frantic struggles to maintain it, even in its most wretched conditions. Only when reason has lost her sway does the suicide do his work. III. BUT NONE CAN SAY WHAT LIFE IS, any more than we can say what electricity is, what gravitation is. We see it, we feel it, we are conscious of it; but that is all. We know it only by its manifestations, and if we can see in what these agree, what they have in common, our text will have much meaning. The exotic cannot bear frost, the camellia from the hothouse perishes before it. The luxuriously reared child suddenly flung into poverty and want would probably die. Now, in all these cases there has been change in the surroundings; but if, with the changed outward conditions in each case, the inward conditions as well could have been changed, the mischief in each case would not have happened. But they were not so changed, and so there was either death or else a diminution of the powers of living. For life, then, there is needed the complete correspondence between the inward nature and the outward surroundings, harmony between them and our nature. Apply all this to the spiritual life. For this life also there must be harmony between itself and its surroundings. What are these, what its soil, atmosphere, elements of growth, its habitat or dwelling-place? God—is the answer; there is none other. God revealed as our spiritual Father is the spirit’s fit outward surroundings, its external relations. Hence, would we live the true spiritual life we must be in harmony with God, our environment. The low, sensual, selfish life kills the spiritual life, as the frost killed the flower. But where, as in Christ supremely, there is harmony between God and the soul, there is the true life. Christ is the way, because He is the revelation of God. (*H. Varley, B.A.*) *The path of life:—*1. It is THE path, because while all other paths end at death, this begins there. 2. Christ took the first step in this path. Some one must lead in it, and He

did, and now says, "Follow Me." 3. It is a customary road; a path is so. There never was another than this, and never will be. 4. Every one who walks in it makes it plainer and easier. We help others to walk in it by walking in it ourselves. 5. Beware, as we go through life, of diverging paths that lead astray to death. 6. The Bible is the lamp in our path. 7. We are always walking in some path—either of life or death. We cannot stand still. 8. To walk in a path we must put forth energy and activity. We must not only know it but walk in it. 9. The path of life, to those who walk in it, grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. 10. Divine guidance is necessary and promised. "Thou wilt show me the path of life." "He will direct thy paths." 11. Am I walking in it? (*J. Stanford Holme, D.D.*) *The path of life*:—The whole passage primarily refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the meaning is—My heart is glad, &c., for Thou wilt show me the path of life, or, Thou hast shown me. But we may apply the words to all who are Christ's, who may be considered here—I. AS REJOICING IN THE LIFE OF GRACE. God quickened in them this life (Eph. ii. 1); for they were spiritually dead. Not Scripture alone teaches this, but observation and experience. Religious things make no more impression on the spiritually dead than sunbeams on a rock. But God's mercy comes in conversion, which is the quickening spoken of. Then are we born again, and begin really to live. II. THEY REJOICE, ALSO, IN THE ASSURANCE OF BEING CONDUCTED SAFE TO GLORY. How else should a dying saint have any comfort at all? How shall a poor stranger in such a dark abyss find the path of life? Then—1. How thankful should we be for the Gospel. Reason may argue in favour of the immortality of the soul, but could never show that such sinful creatures as we are should be admitted into the presence of God. 2. How sharply to be reproved and greatly to be pitied are they who will not walk in the path of life. (*Samuel Lavington.*) *The path of life*:—I. THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY THE METAPHOR. A path. The believer's life is a journey—a walk (Gen. xvii. 1, v. 24; Isa. xxx. 21; Eph. iv. 1). We need both a door and a path. An entrance into life, and a pathway in it. II. THE TEACHING CONTAINED IN THE PASSAGE. The Psalm is prophetic of Christ. To Him "the path of life" was first opened. Lost man had no way to God. The path to life was from the manger to the Cross. The path of life is from the Cross to glory. Adam through sin had forfeited his right of access into the presence of God. Through Christ the way to paradise is opened. III. LESSONS. Man cannot make his own way to God. It is a path already opened for us. We need God to reveal it to us. We must be brought to its true starting-point. The path brings us into the presence and puts before us a prospect. The path brightens as we advance. (*E. H. Hopkins.*) *The path of life*:—I. AN ENCOURAGING PROMISE OF DIVINE DIRECTION. Consider the text in reference to God's answer to prayer. Has not every one the greatest need of Divine direction and heavenly illumination in his passage through life? What untiring diligence, unceasing watchfulness, and persevering prayer is every Christian constrained to use in his hourly converse with the world! How solicitous should every Christian be that, as every step of his life is leading to the path of death, he may be so guided by Divine counsel as to be directed to the path of life, to the path of glory, honour, and immortality, even eternal life. II. THE HAPPY AND BLESSED RESULTS ARISING FROM ATTENTION TO THIS DIRECTION. An admission into His presence, where there is fulness of joy. It is the presence of God, our heavenly Father, which constitutes this fulness of joy. Fulness of joy can only be consummated in the other world. But what tongue can unfold the felicity of that state? III. THE ETERNAL DURATION OF THE HEAVENLY GLORY. This it is which invests the subject with the most momentous and overwhelming magnitude. (*Nat. Meeres, B.D.*) *The assurance of our personal immortality, and what it involves*:—Annihilation of man, or even of an atom, is unknown in God's universe; while the grave is the place in which is covered what would otherwise be painful, offensive, and injurious to survivors. We know life is uncertain; but we practically regard it as certain, at least for a few years. There is in all of us faith in a future life, and hope and desire that in that life our merciful Creator will perfect our nature, and confer upon us a painless and unbroken happiness. The immortality of our race is deeply interesting, but our individual immortality, and what it involves, should be to us a matter of practical and daily concern. There is a sense in which men discover their value in the scale of being. They learn that they have not only a body but a soul, that not only must the wants of the body be supplied, but the mind must be trained, and the soul kept under God's government, for its present health and future bliss. There are three states of man's reasoning mind which no instinct of

the lower animals that we are acquainted with has ever suggested—1. We have no evidence that any creature except man expects death, or has any knowledge of it. 2. The idea of a future life cannot be entertained by the horse or the elephant, by the ant or the bee. 3. As little capacity have they for the desire of it. The instincts of brutes concern their present wants; but man, by his superior endowment, ranges over the present and the future, over what is near and far distant, and by the high faculty of reason can awake to a consciousness of God, and of his own personal immortality. Christianity has given to man a familiarity with pure religion for the soul, for moral and holy discipline, and for appreciating his destiny, which none of the old philosophies had the power to give or to enforce. We are now assured by Jesus that we shall live for ever, and, assuming this, it should involve hopes and duties in relation to ourselves and others of high and practical import. 1. It should involve sacred regard for our own life, and for that of others. The sacredness and value of our own life, and of that of others, should ever be a practical lesson inwrought daily with our very being, whether on the smallest or largest scale. Crime against the person cannot cease unless humanity is respected. There can be no respect for it where there are no just views of its dignity, worth, and moral and religious power; and the way to elevate it is not by depreciating and debasing it, nor by discouraging or damning it; but by loving efforts for its recovery, by purifying the sources of temptation to crime, &c. It also demands on our part sacred regard for the life of others. A hope of immortality also involves a sacred regard to our personal virtue, and to that of others. Whatever will purify our nature, control our passions, convince us of the evil and bitterness of sin, elevate our thoughts and affections, and help us onward in our Christian course, we should seek more perfectly to possess in the prospect of an immortal life. 2. If we had not the immortal life before us we should think of death as our end. In the prospect of our immortal life it must be wise, and every way worthy of us, to form the purest, most holy, and most just conceptions of the blessed God. But how can this personal immortality be assured? We have a soul; it implies immortality. The inequalities of the present state of man imply a sphere of re-adjustment. We desire immortality. The Bible declares it. These grounds of assurance with our individual consciousness, desire, and hope, are what men rest upon in relation to their immortality. It cannot be mathematically, philosophically, or logically demonstrated. (*R. Ainslie.*) In Thy presence is fulness of joy.—*The bliss of the Divine presence*:—Heaven is often described by negatives, but here we have positive statement as to that in which it consists. Therefore consider its perfection. I. IN EXTENT. The state contemplated will be after the resurrection, as it was for our Lord after His resurrection. Hence St. Paul says, "Our conversation is in heaven." And he tells us also of the "glorious body," the "spiritual body" which shall be ours then (1 Cor. xv. 44). And the mind also will partake in this glory, this fulness of joy. How much will result from memory. Also from survey of the present—the heavenly city, the glory of God, the Saviour. And the future, too, will minister to this joy. And the affections likewise, profound admiration, ardent gratitude, entire confidence, perfect love. II. ITS DEGREE. This, too, will be perfect. There will be difference of capacity, and so of degree, which will be determined mainly by character. All that hinders full excellence here will be absent there. III. IN DURATION. It will be endless, and therefore perfect. "These are pleasures for evermore." Without this we could not be satisfied. "A perpetuity of bliss is bliss." Could we fear an end to it, it would wither. Many have denied eternal punishment, but none eternal bliss. Remember its spirituality and purity, and anticipate it with joy. (*J. Kay.*) *God's presence manifested in heaven*:—The manifestation of God to man, which was begun in paradise, is to be continued through eternity. It has been maintained by some that the soul of man ceases to exist at the death of the body, and that there is an actual hiatus in man's being from the moment of death to the period of the resurrection. Others, while admitting the continued existence of the soul, divest it of all consciousness, and suppose it to pass into a state of torpor, until awaked on the morning of the resurrection. In the dissolution of man we see these two distinct substances, body and soul, separated one from the other, and each consigned to a widely different destiny, the body to the earth from which it was taken, and the soul to a continued existence in the spiritual world (Eccles. xii. 7; Matt. x. 28). Here it is evidently taught, such is the vitality of the soul, that no power can annihilate it but the omnipotence of that Being who brought it into existence; and therefore to deny its immortality is to contradict the plainest testimony of God



Himself. Equally opposed to the authority of Holy Scripture is the theory which teaches that, at death, the soul passes into a state of unconsciousness until the resurrection. Our Lord, when confuting the materialists of His day, who cavilled at His doctrine, asserted the actual conscious existence of the Jewish patriarchs, though at that time the latest of them had been dead nearly two thousand years. When the Saviour was about to expire as our atoning victim He said to the thief, who was dying by His side as a penitent malefactor, "Verily, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." When Lazarus died, angels carried him into Abraham's bosom; and when the rich man died, in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. Now, had the souls of men passed at death into a state of unconsciousness, the condition of Lazarus and of the rich man would have been perfectly alike; but here their state is that of awful contrast, the one of blessedness, the other of torment. In conformity with these representations the apostle Paul speaks of death as being preferable to life. But why preferable? Because, as he affirms, to die was gain. Yet to pass into a state of unconsciousness would be to suffer loss—the loss of all the enjoyments and privileges of life (Phil. i. 21–23; 2 Cor. v. 6–8). While these passages decide the question as to the continued existence and consciousness of the soul, they also unfold the grand cause of its blessedness—it is in the soul's being with Christ. The promise to the dying thief was, not only that he should be in paradise, but *with Christ* in paradise. The blessedness anticipated by St. Paul consisted in his being with Christ. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Thus these two ideas—the presence and manifestation of God to man—belong to the dispensation of eternity as well as time, and constitute the blessedness of heaven as well as of earth. The soul was made for God, and can find neither happiness nor satisfaction without Him. This is a law of our being, and is as applicable to the future as it is to the present life. Gravitation is not a more universal and imperative law in the physical universe than is this law of dependence on God in the spiritual world. Let us notice some of the conditions which render heaven an advanced dispensation for the realisation of the presence and manifestation of God to the human soul. 1. In heaven there will be perfect freedom from all the evils, sufferings, and dangers of the present state of being. Ever since man fell from God he has been subject to the evils and sorrows of a fallen state; and though religion greatly mitigates the sufferings of humanity, and supports us under them, yet its highest attainments cannot remove them. The world, the flesh, and the devil are antagonistic to our spiritual welfare, and the Christian life is an athletic struggle—a warfare against active foes and evil influences, which beset us at every step. We inherit diseases, afflictions, and death. Though such a state of things may suit a period of discipline and probation, it is not compatible with a state of absolute safety and perfect enjoyment. The battlefield may develop the courage and valour of the warrior, but the tranquil bower suits the contemplation of the philosopher. The storms of winter may cause to strike deeper the roots of the tree, but the calm sunshine of summer is required to develop its foliage and ripen its fruit. The struggles and tears of a probationary life may give nerve and athletic vigour to the Christian, but the calm rest which remaineth for the people of God is the state better suited to the contemplation of the Divine perfections and the deep consciousness of the Divine presence. 2. In heaven the powers of the soul will be quickened and its capacities enlarged. In the present state the soul, being united to a material fabric, performs many of its acts through a material organisation. A large proportion of its ideas are received through the medium of the senses. There is, however, as clear a distinction between the faculties of the soul and the material organs through which it acts, as there is between the soul itself and the fabric in which it resides. It is the soul that sees and hears, and the eye is merely the optical instrument through which it sees; and the ear is but the acoustic apparatus by which it perceives the various sounds, harsh or harmonious, which are made by the vibrations of the atmosphere. The same principle applies to the other material organs, through which the soul receives impressions and performs its various operations. Besides, it must be remembered that the Holy Spirit has the power of communicating, and the soul the capability of receiving, ideas and impressions by direct and immediate contact, without the interposition of the bodily senses. Hence the inspiration of prophets, and the Divine illumination and spiritual emotions of believers. The mind can abstract, compound, reason, imagine, cherish principles, and experience emotions of deepest joy or anguish, by its own internal operations, even when some of the organs of sense are destroyed. What visions of beauty and grandeur did the mind of Milton create

after his eyeballs had ceased to admit a ray of material light ! But in this case the mind is already furnished, all its faculties stimulated by exercise, refined and expanded by knowledge, and its emotions excited by experience. Let us then suppose such a mind, during the life of the body, bereft not only of one, two, or three, but of all the five senses: what then would be its state ! True, it would be cut off from all further communication with the external world ; but it would still have a world within itself—a world of thought, reasoning, and imagination, equally capacious, and of emotion far more intense than it had before. If such, in truth, would be the state of a soul deprived of the organs of sense, but still linked to the living material fabric, what should hinder it from possessing and exercising the same powers and realising the same state when the body ceases to breathe ! Death is nothing more than the dissolution of the material fabric—the understanding, the memory, the judgment, the conscience, the powers of volition and emotion are still inherent, as essential properties of its nature, and must remain with it for ever ; but vastly increased in their activity and intensity, in consequence of their separation from the earthly tabernacle in which they had resided. All the representations of Holy Scripture sustain these views of the soul in the separate state. The soul of the rich man in hell was in a state of vivid consciousness, having a clear knowledge of the present, with a full recollection of the past, a keen susceptibility of suffering. That the faculties of the soul in the separate state are more vigorous and capacious, and therefore better adapted for receiving the manifestation of God, than while in this mortal body, may be further argued on various grounds. The body has many wants of its own which, though inferior, are imperative in their demands, and retard the development of mind. But on the soul's dismissal from the body these wants all cease, together with all the cares and toils they occasioned, leaving the soul unbroken leisure for contemplations and pursuits congenial to its nature, and exercises adapted to accelerate its highest attainments in knowledge, holiness, and bliss. While united to the body in its present state, the soul is located to a confined and narrow spot of Jehovah's dominions, and cannot explore those displays of the Divine perfections which are presented in other and brighter regions of the universe. Nor is a world abounding with error the most fitted for the perception of truth ; nor a world of sin the best adapted to the growth of moral excellence. Even now, the mind borrows from art means to supply the deficiencies of its own material organs : the microscope to magnify the diminutive, the telescope to discover the remote, and the acoustic tube to convey distant sounds, because the eye and the ear are not fully adequate to the mind's investigations. Hence our best perceptions are but limited and obscure. The narrow grating of a dungeon admits a portion of the light of heaven, but let the incarcerated captive emerge from his cell and he beholds the whole hemisphere beaming with light, and an extended prospect filled with ten thousand beauties unknown before. So may the soul on passing from the body, which now limits its operations. Besides, this material fabric is too frail for the full exertion of mental power. Intense thinking softens the brain, and intense feeling, whether joyous or painful, soon exhausts the nervous energy. Progress is the law of mind, but decay the law of matter ; and, within a very few years, the body becomes incapacitated as the medium for mental attainment and progress. So that were not death to relieve the soul from the restraints of physical weakness and the decay of age, the development of mind must be arrested and its noble powers be doomed to stop in their progress, just at a point when most fitted to make the greatest advancement and to realise the highest joys. But the soul, on emerging from the body, escapes from these restraints ; it breaks its fetters and enters upon a state in which it may exert its vigorous powers unhindered by weakness, unarrested by decay, and expand its capacities without limit and without end. In such a state how adapted the soul to drink in the knowledge of God, to receive the disclosures of Jehovah's perfections, to enjoy the manifestations of His presence, and to sustain an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. The sublime mysteries of creation, providence, and redemption, continually unfolding new glories, will astonish and delight the mind for ever. 3. As another facility for the manifestation of God, the soul shall be admitted into His immediate presence. Heaven is a place as well as a state of being. It is said that spirit has no relation to place, but we confess to the vulgar conception that if a spirit exist it must be either everywhere or somewhere ; that unless it be ubiquitous it must have a limited presence. And, as in the present life, the human spirit is located in the human body, so in eternity it must have a location. As there was a locality for the Shekinah, the visible symbol of the Divine presence, so there is a sacred place, a distinct region, where the personal presence of Jehovah is

manifested and displayed. To determine the particular locality where heaven is, no man is able. As to the description of this glorious place, language fails to set forth its beauty. In every inspired description of heaven the Shekinah, or the visible presence of God, is made prominent. The earthly temple, while forming a shrine for the Shekinah, was a mode of its concealment from the ordinary view of the people. The glory was curtained off and shut in, so that the radiant symbol was enthroned in solitary majesty in the most holy place. But in the New Jerusalem no temple is seen, for no external shade is required; and in the brightness of a better dispensation, concealment and restriction have disappeared. Here, then, is the first consummation of the believer's aspirations and hopes. At last the wilderness is left, and the promised paradise is gained; the weary pilgrim has arrived at home; the absent son and heir has entered his Father's house. The journey of faith ends in realising vision and actual possession. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." But love longs for the sight and presence of its object. But while the promises, which speak of our seeing God, imply an optical vision of the Deity, they imply also a more enlarged, comprehensive, and profound knowledge of His character and perfections; for the manifestation of the Deity, in order to our enjoyment of Him, is the end of all His dispensations, and applies to heaven as well as earth. Hitherto we have seen a gradual brightening of this manifestation, as one economy has succeeded another; and the manifestation in heaven shall be brighter than all its predecessors. Moreover, as the perfection of our vision always depends upon the perfection of the visual organ, and its proper adjustment to the object beheld, as well as upon the degree of light thrown upon it, so does the perfection of the soul's knowledge of God depend upon its moral state, as well as upon the increased light which will beam upon it in eternity. So the untutored savage and the sensualist perceive but little, though they see much, for a brutish man knoweth not these things. Hence there is an amazing difference between men's power of perception and appreciation, arising from the difference in their mental state, their education and habits of life; and often as great a difference between the same men in different periods of their own history! But the pure in heart see God. Their eye is open to perceive Him; their affections are sanctified to appreciate Him, and their aspirations are spiritual to enjoy the Holy One; and thus men see God just in proportion to their personal purity and their resemblance to Him. Here, then, we perceive important reasons which account for a deeper, a richer, a sublimer manifestation of God to the soul in heaven. All the conditions of the mind will favour this development. While absent from a world of illusion, while free from the restraints of a weak and decaying body, it is free from every vestige of sin; while dwelling in the light of the Divine presence, it is capacitated by a state of perfect holiness for seeing and appreciating the beauty of the Lord. There sin shall no more avert the eye from God, nor blur its perception of His glory. 4. In heaven the disposition for communion will be perfectly developed, affording the highest and most perfect gratification of that social principle which God has implanted in our nature. Man was formed for society. Yet society, as it exists in this world, is confessedly imperfect. Sin has infused its poison into this, as well as into every other cup of earthly happiness. There is a want of confidence, of disinterested affection, of constancy and fidelity. But in heaven this defect shall be supplied. For there angels and archangels, and the spirits of just men made perfect—all beings of unspotted holiness and full of love—will be our companions and our friends. "In this world the possession of a few friends, nay, even of one friend, is justly deemed an invaluable treasure, but what will be our blessedness in that world where all are our friends, and where the soul, like the region where it dwells, will be capacious enough to admit them all!" No rival interests, no conflicting aims, no jarring passions, no malign or discordant tempers disturb the society of heaven. This holy fellowship of heaven will contribute, in no small degree, to the grand purpose of a further manifestation of God to His intelligent creatures. In such a state of being, and favoured with such society, how rapidly must the soul grow in the knowledge of God! What are earthly teachers, however erudite, eloquent, and profound, compared with our instructors in heaven? What are our learned libraries here compared with the accumulated treasures of heavenly wisdom and knowledge there? What, indeed, are our present revelations, conveyed as they are through the imperfect medium of human speech, and received by minds so dull in their apprehensions? 5. In heaven there shall also be the most intimate, delightful, and ennobling communion with God. The disposition for communion dwells in the Deity Himself and ere a solitary creature existed it was reciprocally exercised



between the persons of the Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man being formed in God's image and likeness, this disposition for communion was implanted in his nature; and while it gives man delight in the society of his fellow-man, and makes the communication of thought and affection a source of happiness, it finds its highest gratification and development in fellowship with God. There the soul, dwelling in the immediate presence of Deity, and disengaged from the absorbing cares and distractions of a secular state of being, will realise the most intimate and uninterrupted fellowship with God. It will not, indeed, as the oriental philosophy teaches, be absorbed into the Deity, and, losing its personal consciousness, be swallowed up in the abyss of the Godhead; but with its identity preserved, as distinct and personal as it is in this inferior state, it will realise a union with God so perfect in the aspirations of its desires, in the intercommunion of its thoughts and affections, that it will live in God and God in it. We know a man best, not by seeing his picture or reading his history, but by personal intercourse and communion. Thus two congenial minds penetrate into each other's thoughts, and reciprocate each other's dispositions; they see as they are seen, and know as they are known. And thus it is (let us reverently speak it) that the soul knows the great and eternal God—not merely intellectually, as His perfections are displayed in His works and His character unfolded in progressive dispensations, but in the deep personal consciousness of our union with Deity. In this manifestation of the Deity the Holy Spirit will operate in heaven as He does on earth, but with an augmented power proportioned to the superior state and capacity of disembodied souls. Searching, as He does, the deep things of God, He will reveal them to the blessed, with whom He will abide for ever, 6. In heaven the saints will be engaged in the most ennobling employments. 7. There is one word uttered by an inspired apostle which is more pregnant with meaning as to the manifestation of God to the soul in the spiritual world, and of the eternal happiness flowing from it, than could be expressed by a thousand volumes. It is the single declaration that we “are heirs of God.” The apostle says the believer is an heir—not of the material universe, for that is poor compared with the treasure named—not of heaven, for that is not expressive of the opulence intended; but he is an heir of the God of the universe, of Him whose presence makes heaven what it is—an heir of the Deity Himself. As the mind has no limit to its development, nothing but the infinite can suffice for it; and there is nothing infinite but God. Of God Himself, then, the believer is now an heir; in eternity he enters into his possession and enjoyment, with free and full access to the fountain of eternal blessedness. All there is in God is his: his to know, so far as his understanding can comprehend; his to enjoy, so far as his capacity can contain; and eternity itself is designed to yield successive developments of the infinite fulness there is in God. 8. The state of the soul in heaven is one of further expectation. No dispensation which God has given to man in the present world has been a complete and ultimate good, but an instalment of some greater good to come. Promise and prophecy have ever led the mind onward and upward. Indeed, the exercise of faith and hope has been a prominent and indispensable element in that educational process by which the great Teacher has trained and developed the human mind in every age. Hence the progressive development of the Gospel plan, from the first promise of a Saviour through the successive stages of the Divine economy. Hence, too, the transition from the cloudy symbol of the temple to the personal manifestation of the incarnate God. Thus faith and hope live in heaven as well as on earth; and though much once promised is now realised, yet from the elevation to which he is exalted he beholds a wider horizon of truth and a brighter prospect of future blessedness; and faith in the promise and hope of the expected good are elements of his present enjoyment. Having noticed the various elements of the happiness of heaven, we ought here to remark that the essential qualification for this blessedness is holiness. We cannot conclude without adverting to the awful contrast presented in the condition of the wicked after death. They have the same nature, but a different doom. (*W. Cooke, D.D.*) *Heavenly felicity*:—I. THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY FELICITY. It is living in the presence of God. It is living at the right hand of God, that is, in a state of exaltation, dignity, and glory. It is a state of joy. It is a state of pleasure. II. THE PLENITUDE OF HEAVENLY FELICITY. Expressed by the word “fulness.” Here our enjoyments, even our religious enjoyments, are accompanied by fear, mixed with sorrow, frequently interrupted, at best but partial, and at most but small. There will be fulness, what is pure, without any alloy; perpetual, without any interruption; and what is enough, without any satiety. III. THE DURATION OF

HEAVENLY FELICITY WILL BE FOR EVERMORE. "Evermore" is one of the scriptural expressions denoting interminable duration. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

*The power of a presence*:—Not necessarily a spoken word or an act performed—simply a presence. There is a Divine presence, distinct from any word, or act, or exercise of Divine power; the charm is found in this, that God is there; it is what He is, not what He does or says, which His presence emphasises. The use of worship is partly this, that it makes His invisible presence a reality. The more forms and ceremonies corrupt the simplicity of worship, the more is attention diverted from God as a spirit. Closet prayer is especially helpful, if not hurried and superficial. To wait until a proper conception of God's presence impresses the soul makes prayer of vastly more service to the suppliant. Every human being has a presence. It used to be said of Lord Chatham, that in the man was something finer than in anything he said. We bear with us a power that for good or evil is greater than any influence exerted by our deliberate acts or words. Swedenborg called it an "atmosphere." It is as inseparable from the person as the fragrance from the flower. It is the unconscious reflection and transmission of character. It sometimes contradicts the words and studied externals; and it sometimes coincides with and confirms their witness. That atmosphere makes the home and the Church and society more than all else. Negatively, a good "presence" restrains, and positively, it inspires. To stay in Fénelon's society, an infidel said, would compel him to be a Christian. While we emphasise the deliberate and voluntary part of our lives, God doubtless sees that the most potent, for good or evil, are the influences which silently and unconsciously go out from us, like the savour of salt and the radiance of light. (*Homiletic Review.*)

*True happiness*:—I. TRUE HAPPINESS IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED HERE. This is implied in the text. The world is not our home. This life is but a small part of our existence. Take a general survey of the condition of human life. How weak and helpless is infancy! Childhood and youth are vanity! How many dangers always attend us! Who is secure? Changes of condition and circumstances are many times as sudden as they are sad. God is good and wise, as well as great. His benevolence is as unbounded as His power. Joys are mingled with our sorrows. Religion does not undertake to preserve its friends from affliction, but forewarns them of it, that they may be prepared to meet it. And it is a mighty support and cordial under it. Moreover, we have never found in the world as much as corresponds with all the capacities, and fully answers all the expectations, and gratifies all the desires of our souls.

II. WHERE SHALL WE PARTAKE OF THAT HAPPINESS OF WHICH OUR NATURE RENDERS US CAPABLE? We must die before we can thus live. Death will transmit the children of God to the glorious presence of their heavenly Father, and there shall they be blessed.

III. THE PROPERTIES AND EXCELLENCIES OF OUR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS.

1. As to the degree—perfection. Nothing is wanting to render the joy complete.
2. As to the duration—perpetuity. The joys are for evermore. God is the fountain; and pleasures flow at His right hand in an endless stream.

*Reflections.* (1) Give not up your prospects and hopes of heavenly pleasures, perfect and perpetual as they are, for the sake of any worldly profits or sinful pleasures. (2) To be without God's gracious presence with us upon earth is very grievous; and with that we ought to give no place to fear and dejection, fear of evils that may happen to us, or dejection under such as have already overtaken us. (*E. Sandercock, D.D.*)

*The happiness of the saints*:—Joy is the soul's rest and satisfaction in the enjoyment of a suitable good.

1. The character of those who shall have fulness of joy. Such as repent of their sins; believe in Christ, are upright in their profession, and follow the example of Christ.
2. Wherein this blessedness consists. The presence of God is the presence of His glory; the presence of His face, without a veil; His immediate presence, without obscuring mediums; His countenancing presence, as a pleased friend and father; His fixed and abiding presence, we shall be for ever with Him; His influxive and efficacious presence, a glimpse of which made Moses' face to shine. Their happiness is also occasioned by those joys and pleasures which are at God's right hand. The joy and pleasures of the heavenly world are spiritual and heavenly, not carnal and earthly. Pure without mixture. A multitude without number. Full without any want. Constant, without diminution or interruption. Perpetual.

*Improvement*: 1. Hence see the folly and madness of those who seek their portion in this life. 2. Let such glorious views and expectations comfort the heirs of glory in the midst of all their tribulations. 3. Let it excite all such to diligence and activity in the ways of God. (*T. Hannam.*)

*The emotions of a saint just arrived in heaven*:—Fulness of joy is a most comprehensive expression. It implies the per-

fection of enjoyment in all the faculties of being. That joy which is destined to ultimate extinguishment cannot be said to be perfect joy. The expression "fulness of joy" cannot have relation to this world. It must stand related to some other and higher sphere. Heaven is the goal of the Christian's race. 1. The glorified Christian will feel that he has been the subject of a change which affects everything connected with him save his identity. One source of singular emotions is the absence of the body, the former inlet of physical pain, and of general suffering. 2. Another source of new and joyful emotions springs from the unencumbered action of the spirit, and its unconstrained inspiration in the air of heaven. 3. Another source of happiness is the fact that the believer has now entered into more exalted society than he enjoyed on earth. 4. The friendships of heaven will be of a higher order than those of earth. 5. Another element will be the clear light which will then be shed upon all God's dealings with the believer while he was upon earth. 6. That which will give fulness of joy to the glorified believer will be the unutterable privilege of standing in the presence of his Saviour Jesus Christ. (*A. S. Gardner.*)

*The presence of God.*—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD HERE. God is present everywhere by His infinite knowledge and almighty energy. He fills universal nature. But the Psalmist speaks of a more gracious presence, those peculiar manifestations of Himself with which He delights His believing and obedient people, and which He affords them through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only in Jesus Christ that we, sinful creatures, can see or think of a holy and just God with any comfort. II. HOW DOES IT APPEAR THAT IN THIS PRESENCE THERE IS FULNESS OF JOY? Consider this presence as it is known in—

1. This world. Here the enjoyment of it first begins. To the good man the Divine presence gives a peculiar and most lively relish to every enjoyment here. The creatures around us, the beauties of nature and art, the social connections in life, the Divine Word, and all means of grace, are all more desirable and delightful as tokens of the Divine presence are found in them. We are all exposed to affliction, trials, perils and death, and our consolation in all comes from the presence of God. 2. The world to come. There our joy will be full indeed, because—(1) It will be absolutely pure and unmixed. It will be all joy, without any alloy of sorrow; without even the fear of it. (2) It answers to every want and desire of our nature. It includes every possible delight, and will leave no desire unsatisfied. (3) It will be full in point of duration. It will fill even the endless ages of eternity itself. (4) It is all derived from, and supported by, the fulness of Christ. Improvement: 1. How mean the sentiments and pursuits of the bulk of mankind appear in view of this truth. 2. There must be some very great change wrought in us, before we can so enjoy the Divine presence as to find our happiness there. 3. How invaluable a blessing the Gospel is. (*Daniel Turner.*)

*The presence of God, as it is the heaven and happiness of the saints.*—The presence of God maketh heaven, and the perfect happiness to be enjoyed there. I. THE CHARACTERS OF THOSE WHO SHALL BE BLESSED BY BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR EVER. 1. Those who believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ with a Divine, practical, heart-purifying, and life-sanctifying faith. 2. You who are upright in a good profession. 3. You who are Christ's honest servants. II. WHAT PRESENCE OF GOD MAKES HEAVEN UNTO THE SAINTS. The presence of His essence is as really on earth as in heaven. 1. The presence of God that makes happy in heaven is the presence of His glory. 2. It is the presence of His face; in the glory of the Mediator. 3. His immediate presence, manifested no longer through obscuring mediums. 4. His countenancing presence. 5. His fixed and abiding presence. 6. His efficacious and inflexible presence. (*James Robt, M. A.*)

*"Fullness of joy" to come.*—There can be no doubt that in their primary application these words bear reference to the Lord Jesus; for of Him only could it be said, "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." But while we thus believe that the Psalmist is writing chiefly about Jesus, we at the same time feel that, He being the Head of the body, the Church, these verses may for the most part be applied to all those who are made living members of His body by the mighty operation of the Lord the Spirit. The text speaks of a "fulness of joy," and tells us where it is to be had. Jesus always intended His people to be happy. One of His sweetest discourses closes with the words, "these things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you and your joy might be full." But the believer has to confess, notwithstanding all the blessed promises of God's Word, that his joy is not full. He has real joy, spiritual joy, springing from the consciousness of the love of God; and this joy is a great help to him. But he wants more. Now, amongst the things which interrupt the fulness of our joy on earth is—



I. THE WEAKNESS OF OUR FAITH. There are very few, even of the most advanced Christians, who do not mourn over weakness of faith. Abraham himself failed once and again. We walk by sight overmuch, or at least desire to. II. THE SLOWNESS OF HIS GROWTH IN GRACE. He longs to love God with all his heart and soul and strength; to be holy even as Christ is holy, perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect. But when he sits down to examine himself, and weighs his thoughts, his words, his deeds, in the scales of the sanctuary, he finds so much of worldly conformity, so much cleaving to the earth, so little rising in thought and spirit to heaven, that he rises from the examination with a drooping spirit and an aching heart. III. THE POWER AND ASCENDENCY OF BESETTING SIN. Whether it be pride, or covetousness, or envy, ill-temper or uncharitableness, whatever it be, we have all of us some sin which has a greater power over us than others. It may be we fondly deemed we had wholly subdued it. But in a little while some trifling temptation is laid in our way; it looks enticing, fascinating, profitable; away go all our good resolutions, and we are betrayed into the commission of that very sin against which we had prayed so earnestly, and whose power we thought we had broken. IV. SEASONS OF SPIRITUAL DESERTION. He has been walking for some time in the light of God's countenance, rejoicing ever to look up and see a Father's smiling face. But things are sadly altered now. Prayer goes up, but the answer comes not. Difficulties encompass him on every side; his enemies are many and mighty, yea, they come in like a flood; he cries aloud, but his Father makes as though He heard not; distress, tribulation, anguish come upon him. Again he well-nigh sinks in despair. V. CARE CONCERNING PROVISION FOR THE FUTURE. You, my poorer brethren, will understand what we mean. Most, if not all of you, have to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow. We meet you looking careworn, anxious, depressed; joy has departed from you, and trial wears you down. Very many, we fear most of you, increase these cares and troubles by carrying them yourself instead of casting them on Jesus; and you lose much of the joy that religion affords, because you refuse to see a Father's hand in all that befalls you. But to you, who are the Lord's own dear people, we say, yet a little while and these cares shall be over. VI. THE LOSS OF THE NEAR AND THE DEAR. But look on to blessed reunion in Christ. (*Henry J. Berger.*) At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.—*Heaven*:—Two ideas are here brought together,—fulness of joy, and the presence of God. Joy is the realisation of God's presence in heaven. This absolute necessity for some distinct and uniform characteristic in order to the enjoyment of heaven seems to be very generally forgotten. The general idea is that every one is to be perfectly happy there, according to his own inclinations. Heaven is not a place in which the evil disposed could find pleasure if they were put there. Consider what is happiness. On what it depends. Happiness is a relative term. In circumstances precisely the same, one man would be happy and another miserable. To produce happiness, circumstances and character—position and disposition—must agree, and if they do not, either must change so as to become suited to the other. If a man who is now wicked would be happy in heaven, his character must become changed to suit his circumstances. Our Lord Jesus has secured for all who believe on Him the free pardon of all sins. He has opened to all a heaven which they never could have earned by their own acts. But He has never abolished the necessary qualification for actual admittance there. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) On the presence of God in a future state:—In the early age of the world those explicit discoveries of a state of immortality which we enjoy had not yet been given to mankind. But in every age God has permitted such hopes to afford consolation and support to those who served Him. I. THE HOPE OF THE PSALMIST IN HIS PRESENT STATE. "Thou wilt show me the path of life." There are different paths or courses of conduct, which may be pursued by men in this world; a path which leads to life and happiness, and a path which issues in death and destruction. These opposite lines of conduct are determined by the choice which men make of virtue or of vice; and hence men are divided into two great classes, according as their inclinations lead them to good or to evil. The path of life is often a rough and difficult path, and it conducts us up a steep ascent. The hope that good men entertain is, that this path of life shall be shown them by God; that, when their intentions are upright, God will both instruct them concerning the road which leads to true happiness, and will assist them to pursue it successfully. In all revelation there is no doctrine more comfortable than this, that good men are pursuing a path which God has discovered and pointed out to them. Every path

in which He is the conductor must be honourable, must be safe, must bring them in the end to felicity. The Divine Being will never desert those who are endeavouring to follow out the path which He has shown them. With Him there is no oblique purpose to turn Him aside from favouring the cause of goodness. No promise that He has made shall be allowed to fail. II. THE TERMINATION OF THESE HOPES IN A FUTURE STATE. All happiness assuredly dwells with God. The "fountain of life" is justly said to be with Him. Whatever gladdens the hearts of men or angels with any real and satisfactory joy comes from heaven. Every approach to God must be an approach to felicity. The enjoyment of His immediate presence must be the consummation of felicity. The whole of what is implied in arriving at the presence of the Divinity we cannot expect to comprehend. Surrounded now with obscurity, no hope more transporting can be opened to a good man than that a period is to come when he shall be allowed to draw nearer to the Author of his existence, and to enjoy the sense of His presence. In order to convey some idea of that future bliss, by such an image as we can now employ, let the image be taken from the most glorious representative of the Supreme Being, the sun in the heavens. There are two sublime and expressive views of the Divine Essence given us in Scripture, on which it may be edifying that our thoughts should rest for a little—(1) God is Light. The revelation of His presence infers a complete diffusion of light and knowledge among all who partake of that presence. This forms a primary ingredient of happiness. Ignorance, or the want of light, is the source of all our present misconduct, and of all our misfortunes. The light of God's presence not only banishes the miseries which were the effects of former darkness, but also confers the most exquisite enjoyment. (2) God is Love. His presence must, of course, diffuse love. Heaven implies a society, and the felicity of that society is constituted by the perfection of love and goodness flowing from the presence of the God of love. Hence follows the entire purification of human nature from all those malevolent passions which have so long rendered our abode on earth the abode of misery. Considering God under these two illustrious characters, which are given of Him in Scripture as Light and as Love, it follows that in His presence there must be fulness of joy. Remember that, in order to arrive at the presence of God, the path of life must previously be shown to us by Him, and in this path we must persevere to the end. These two things cannot be disjoined, a virtuous life and a happy eternity. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *Heaven*.—I. OUR TRUEST NOTIONS OF HEAVEN ARE DERIVED FROM CONSIDERATIONS RATHER OF WHAT IT IS NOT THAN OF WHAT IT IS. How glorious a liberty it will be to attain "the redemption of our body." Think of the toil it has to undergo, the distempers and pains to which it is subject. But then, we shall be out of the reach of these. There will be no sickness, no withering old age; no poor shall cry for bread, none shall thirst or hunger any more. And there will "be no more death." No, not of the irrational creation; the sheep and cattle will be slaughtered no more. And there will be no more sin. Then the nations learn war no more. Sin is the root of all our miseries. But days of innocence that we cannot know here will be realised there. Such are some of its negative blessings. II. LET US CONSIDER SOME OF ITS POSITIVE BLESSINGS. The happiness of heaven is occasionally described under the most captivating forms of rural pleasure. We read of its green pastures, its clear fountains, its rivers of pleasures. When I sometimes walk in a garden, amidst fruits and flowers, and birds that sing among the branches, I feel relieved in turning to those promises which hold out to us, as it were, a renewal and restoration of these calm delights, in an unchangeable world, in the paradise of God. And sometimes the state of blessedness is likened to a city; and its brilliancy and magnificence are described. See the description, in the Revelation, of the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Such is the residence which God has prepared for His people. There they will pass, not a solitary existence, but will form a united and happy society together. All jarring interests, all selfish and discordant passions unknown. And then we shall meet the holy and illustrious dead: all who have walked with God on earth, or suffered for the testimony of Jesus. To see there, perhaps, those who led us to Christ, and our parents who watched and wept and prayed over our souls, and the children who followed their good example. Above all, we shall meet the Lord Jesus there. He has promised this to all His faithful ones. The evil hearts of men are made known by their desertion of God, but so are also all faithful souls which confess Him when all the world is against Him. How will His faithful flock hail their triumphant Shepherd, when He appears in glory! And then, there is the beatific vision of God—Himself unveiled without a cloud. But we have not now faculties

for so high a theme. And these joys are for all who will accept Christ. We could never reach them by ourselves. Receive the Gospel in its fulness and it will prepare you for them. We, then, pray you, "Be reconciled to God." (*H. Woodward, A.M.*) *The future happiness of God's people set before the unconverted:*—God appeals to us by various motives. Amongst others this, which is addressed to our natural desire for happiness,—the blessedness of the children of God in another world. In the hope that some may be constrained thereby to seek Christ, we would consider the words before us. Now were the promises of our text to be realised, then, what in a few years would be our happiness? I. IT WOULD BE COMPLETE. "Fulness of joy" is there. No more evil. Especially no more sin. Therein "dwelleth righteousness." It may be a far more glorious earth than ours, but this is not the substance of our hope. That hope is for freedom from sin; no more tormenting passions, no more envy, or anger, or tyrannical appetites. And there will be no more sight of evil in others. And no more temptations of Satan. And no more exposure to the wrath of God, for there shall be "no more curse." And death and sickness and pain shall be no more. Nor toil, nor weariness, nor want, for the Lord is our Shepherd and we shall not want. And then we shall see His glory and His bliss. And all this will make us like Him. Our body shall be changed "like unto His glorious body." That was revealed, in fact, at the Transfiguration. And what is better, we shall be like Him in mind as well as form. When we see His wisdom, goodness, holiness, truth and love, then shall we contract something of the same glory. And we shall share in His glorious bliss. It will be "fulness of joy." Each as happy as his soul can be. II. THEN JOYS WILL BE AS ETERNAL AS THEY ARE COMPLETE. Death shall not take them from us, nor will they be liable to decay. It is an inheritance "incorruptible" and that "fadeth not away." And yet many "make light" of these promises. They have no heart for such a heaven. May God change their heart. You, whose hope this is, live as those who look for such a heaven. (*Baptist W. Noel, M.A.*) *Nature and excellencies of the happiness of heaven:*—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE JOY AND PLEASURES AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND. 1. There are pleasures in heaven capable of giving joy and satisfaction. 2. There is a communication of these pleasures unto them who are in the immediate presence of God. 3. The saints have joy in the vision of God, the immediate fruition of Him and their likeness to Him. II. THE EXCELLENCIES OF THESE JOYS AS EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT. They are spiritual and heavenly, pure without mixture; a multitude without number; a fulness of them without want; a constancy without interruption or diminution, and a perpetuity without end. (*James Robe, M.A.*) *Little joy to be found on earth:*—The ancient Thracians used to keep a box in their houses into which they dropped a white stone to mark the day when they were happy, as it was an event which so seldom occurred. Lord Nelson wrote to a friend, "I am persuaded there is no true happiness in this present state." Such was the mournful experience of one of the world's heroes, on whom plenty, pleasures and glory combined to wait and minister. Lord Byron writes to the poet Moore, "I have been counting over the days when I was happy since I was a boy, and cannot make them more than eleven. I wonder if I shall be able to make them a dozen before I die."

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### PSALM XVII.

VER. 1. Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, . . . that goeth not out of reigned lips.—*Conscious sincerity:*—The Psalmist is quite sure that he himself is sincere. The verses which follow seem to be a kind of anticipation of the Pharisee's self-satisfied prayer; but they are nothing of the kind. The reference is not to sinlessness, but to sincerity. The Psalmist does not say, I am a pure man, without a stain upon the heart or hand. He says, I am a sincere man, the general purpose I have had in view is a purpose marked by honesty. He does not represent himself as pure snow in the face of heaven, but as a man whose supreme motive has been a motive of honesty and general truthfulness. Sincerity can appeal to the right. We draw our prayer out of our own character. This suppliant is so sure of his own honesty that he says, Let the whole case be settled honestly. At other times, when he knows there is not a clean spot upon his whole constitution—one sound healthy spot—



he falls right down before God and weeps out his soul in penitence. . . . We should be sure of our motive before we invoke the doing of right. It is better for us to invoke the exercise of mercy. Most men will get more from pity than they ever can get from righteousness. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Prayer out of feigned lips* :—It is observable that the eagle soareth on high, little intending to fly to heaven, but to gain her prey ; and so it is that many do carry a great deal of seeming devotion in lifting up their eyes towards heaven ; but they do it only to accomplish with more ease, safety, and applause their wicked designs here on earth ; such as without are Catos, within Neros ; hear them, no man better ; search and try them, no man worse ; they have Jacob's voice, but Esau's hands ; they profess like saints, but practise like Satans ; they have their long prayers, but short prayings ; they are like apothecaries' gallipots—having without the title of some excellent preservative, but within they are full of deadly poison ; counterfeit holiness is their cloak for all manner of villanies, and the midwife to bring forth all their devilish designs. (*Peter Bales.*) *Justice, mercy, and perfection* :—I. A CRY FOR JUSTICE (vers. 1-7). Things in the mind of David.—1. A sense of truthfulness. He was conscious that there was no discrepancy between his speech and his spirit. The man, unless he feels that he is sincere, will never dare to appeal to heaven for justice. Virtuous sincerity requires that there should be not only an exact correspondence between the speech and spirit, but also between the spirit and eternal realities. 2. A desire for the Divine verdict. "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence." The human soul everywhere holds that there is justice at the head of the universe, and that it will sooner or later vindicate the right. 3. A consciousness of a Divine searching. "Thou hast proved mine heart." A man may be deeply conscious of his imperfection before God, and yet conscious of his innocence of the charges brought against him by man. 4. A determination to be blameless in his speech. "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." What he means is, I will utter nothing wrong concerning mine enemies, nothing that can justify their harsh and cruel conduct. 5. An assurance of Divine protection. He was protected from ruin. Protected by God. And protected in connection with his own agency. God's agency in connection with man's deliverance neither supersedes the necessity nor interferes with the freedom of human effort. 6. A dread of falling from rectitude. "Hold up my goings in Thy paths." This means—I am right as far as mine enemies are concerned at present. I am conscious of no wrong. I am anxious to retain my blamelessness. To retain my blamelessness I need Divine help. 7. A confidence that God will attend to his prayer. The meaning is—I have invoked Thee heretofore, and do so still, because I know that Thou wilt hear. II. HERE IS A CRY FOR MERCY. "Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness." A prayer for protection from enemies. Note the character in which he appeals to God for protection. He appeals to Him as a mighty Saviour. The manner in which he desired protection. The enemies from whom he sought protection. The cry for mercy is as deep and universal as that for justice. III. HERE IS A CRY FOR PERFECTION. Three facts deduce from the words. 1. That the death of a good man is an awaking from sleep. There is much spiritual torpor and spiritual dreaming even in the best. 2. In this awaking at death there will be the complete assimilation of the soul to God. 3. In this assimilation will consist the everlasting satisfaction of our nature. There is no satisfaction without this. The spiritual powers will not work harmoniously under the dominion of any other disposition. The conscience will frown upon any other state of mind. The Great One will not bless with His friendship any other state of mind in His creatures. Likeness to God is likeness to His controlling disposition. His controlling disposition is disinterested love, and this is that well. which springs up to everlasting life. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 3. *Thou hast visited me in the night.*—*God's visitations in the night* :—God has two daily messengers of His love for men, bringing to them His gifts of love—Day and Night. Let us think of His visitations to us by night, when we are still and when He would have us reflect. The Psalm is evidently an evening Psalm. I. HOW WELL IT IS THAT THE DAY SHOULD CLOSE WITH REFLECTION, that God should visit us thus. Rest alone would be a visitation from God, His gift. But sleep is the better when we pass to it from prayer. If a knock comes to the door at night when all is quiet how it startles us. In the day we should not notice it, but at night we needs must. And Christ may say, "I came in the day but was not heard ; behold, I now stand at the door and knock." It is well to reflect at the close of each day on each day. In the bustle of business we do not understand the mean-

ing of our life. Perhaps we never shall till the bustle of all life's days is done and we stand on "the safe and quiet shore of eternity." There are, too, our own ways that need to be understood. Conscience needs to be quickened, and one day it will be. Just as the manipulations of the photographer in the dark chamber bring forth a picture which has been burnt into the plate by rays of light before, that when completed it may be brought to light again, and men may see what manner of men they were; so in the dark chambers of the dead, in the hidden spirit world, there shall be a quickening of conscience. And God has given to us the darkness of night in which, away from busy life, we may bring forth the pictures of the day that are imprinted on conscience. Cultivate this photography of life. II. AND THERE IS THE NIGHT OF TROUBLE. God visits those who trust Him then. Let there be also in this night reflection, review. Memory is given us that we may not depend for happiness on the present. And review in this night your conduct in your joys. Ah, who is worthy of their joy? Be willing then to bear the night. "God's blessings come in the night," so says a German proverb. There is no night in which God is not near us. No, not the last eventide, the darkest of all. In Christ we need not fear. (*T. Gasquoine, B.A.*) *The religious aspects of night* :—There is no necessary contrast between what are called the scientific and the religious aspects of nature. Science keeps its eye upon the facts of nature, carefully verifies and measures them, and seeks to discover their exact relations to each other. Religion, too, is interested in nature, and behind each natural fact sees chiefly Him to whom both effect and cause are traceable. Religion is more necessary to us men than science, and therefore God has taught us religion first of all. The succession of day and night will illustrate what I am saying. We know the physical causes of night, but it has another and a higher meaning, and this is hinted at in our text. The religious aspects of night are many. It strikes us first of all—I. AS AN INTERRUPTION. It breaks in upon and suspends all human occupation. At the very least eight hours in the twenty-four, a quarter of a century in the life of a man of seventy-five, are withdrawn from the demands of labour. And as each day the shadow of night creeping around the world advances, millions of human workers hail the approaching pause in toil which is thus mercifully imposed upon them. Man might have been so fashioned as not to need this, but this enforced suspension of activity cannot but suggest a meaning. It suggests not merely the limited stock of strength at our disposal which needs thus often to be refreshed and replenished, but it also reminds us that we have a higher life than that of the activity of the day, and which shall last when all belonging to this shall have passed away. II. NIGHT SUGGESTS DANGER. The daylight is of itself protection. When it is withdrawn much becomes possible which it forbids. Night is the opportunity of wild beasts and of evil men. They ply their trade during its dark and silent hours. And thus St. Paul describes the workers of darkness as "unfruitful." Our Lord compares the unexpectedness of His second coming "as a thief in the night." If, indeed, St. Paul were to visit London on the afternoon of a bank holiday, it is to be feared that he would have to reconsider his remark that "they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Still, on the whole, the night is the season of peril and disaster. We yet need to pray God that He would "protect us from all perils and dangers of this night." For notwithstanding brilliantly lighted streets and well organised police there are yet special perils—such as those of fire in our large and lofty houses, from which the tenants of rude huts and shepherds' cabins would find ready escape. It is with civilised as with savage man, God is, in the last resort, our only Protector. III. NIGHT IS A TIME DURING WHICH GOD OFTEN SPEAKS TO THE SOUL OF MAN. No believer in God's existence can reasonably deny that He can communicate with the mind of man. We think sleeplessness a great misfortune, but it may be a great blessing. For never does God speak more solemnly, more persuasively to the human soul, than in the waking hours of night. Then conscience has a chance; we listen and hear no other voice. Conscience revives the past, and the eye of sense rests upon no object which can compete with and efface the awful impression. Then religion asserts its empire, and we acknowledge to ourselves with sorrow how much we have forgotten or despised that had the first of all claims upon us. See the many references in the Psalms to these holy uses of the night. One practical lesson, at least, we may remember as bearing upon this subject—the duty of storing the mind while we are yet comparatively young and strong with that which in the hours of sleeplessness and pain will enable us to rise up to God. A mind thus well stored need never fear that the waking hours of night are lost. (*Canon Liddon.*) I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.—*Restraining the tongue* :—Such was the pious resolution of the Psalmist when the tongues of his enemies were

transgressing both against him and his God. Silence would produce the better effect, both on his own mind and on his enemies. I. THE EVIL WHICH THE PSALMIST DREADED. Transgressing with his tongue. The tongue, indeed, is only the channel through which the depravity of the heart proceeds, but it is a channel of remarkable facility. It is liable to transgress—1. Against God. By murmuring at the providence of God. 2. Against mankind. There are cruel expressions of malice and revenge sometimes uttered by one man against another to ruin his character. There are those who injure religion and their character by a propensity to speak with levity or bitterness. There are those who transgress by flattery—an evil more injurious than the keenest reproach sometimes. II. THE BEST MEANS OF AVOIDING THIS EVIL. “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.” What does this purpose imply? 1. A serious regard to Divine inspection and authority. 2. Attention to the state of the heart. 3. We should aim to cultivate religious knowledge, and promote, at every proper opportunity, religious conversation. The most likely way to preserve the tongue from evil is to employ it in what is valuable and useful. Prepared by the secret exercises of piety and devotion, we shall enjoy the full delights of domestic and social life without injury and without remorse. (*Homilist.*) *The mouth kept from transgression:*—A friend of Archbishop Leighton said that, in free and frequent intercourse with him for twenty-two years, “I never knew him say an idle word, or a word that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper but that I wished to be in at the last moment of my life.”

Ver. 4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.—*Young men warned against unsound principles:*—Many are the nets that are spread for the souls of men, especially of young men. By means of evil associations and unsound or unscriptural principles. Of these latter we will speak now. They may be classified under three heads. I. THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY OR COMPROMISE. Things are done to serve a present purpose without regard to their being right or wrong, or whether Christian rectitude approve or condemn. II. SELF-INDULGENCE, OR ANIMAL GRATIFICATION. Here he is in danger of being misled both by his equals and by himself. It is said that appetites were given, not to be crushed but gratified; that religious requirements and natural tendencies, emanating both from God, can never be incompatible with each other, and that asceticism and austerity are signs, not of a true but of a false religion. But in this case, as in every other, he who proves too much proves nothing. The natural appetites were designed not merely for gratification, but for moral discipline. They are not to be gratified alone, but subordinated, and due subordination is not asceticism, nor proper control of the affections, austerity. Religious requirements harmonise with natural tendencies, in that they impose a restriction at the very point where satisfaction terminates and excess begins: they apply reasonable and salutary restraints. Regard first the culture of the soul and you will never compromise the welfare of the body; preserve only what is due to God and you will be in little danger of withholding what is due to man. III. THE PRINCIPLE OF FALSE APPEARANCES OR FALSE ASSUMPTIONS. For it adopts a fallacious standard, superseding God's Word by popular opinion. It is peculiarly necessary to guard against this in an age where names, self-assumed, are a prolific source of deception, and evil often puts on and parades the semblance of good. It is the way of the world, that lives without and forgets Him. It is the way of those who are often men of high honour, but of low principle; of strict uprightness, but of lax morality; men of reputable conduct, but of no religion. And especially avoid that “path of the destroyer” amidst the works of men, and of which Solomon says, “Let not thine heart decline to her ways.” The number and effrontery of those who yield to this temptation make it peculiarly subtle and fatal. The young man, new to the world, sees what others do, and that they are not the worse thought of for it, nor think at all worse of themselves; he hears some avowing it and others vindicating it—how shall he escape? Only “by the word of Thy lips”: that word “hid in the heart,” and its principles known and embraced. So shall you be enabled to stand in the evil day. (*Thomas Dale, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.—*Slippery places:*—The blessing of sanctified affliction is that we are made to see our weakness. David here seems as a little child, ready to fall, stretching out its hand and crying



to its Father, "Hold up my goings," &c. I. THE BELIEVER'S POSITION IS OFTEN A VERY SLIPPERY ONE. Christ told us, "in the world ye shall have tribulation," and this is part of it. We are sent into the world to glorify God's holy law. And this we do by a life of simple faith in Jesus. II. IT IS SO EVEN IN THE PATHS OF GOD. Even in His very paths. Liberty may degenerate into licence; holy caution into legalism; activity into neglect of communion with God, and that into neglect of service. Reliance in Christ to forgetfulness of the Spirit of Christ; and even joy in affliction to an overlooking of our sin, which is the cause of it. III. THE PETITION. "Hold up my goings," &c. 1. It is the very picture of helplessness. "I can do nothing, cannot stir a step, without Thee." Oh! to be brought here. The omnipotence of weakness. 2. It is the language of faith. In ver. 6 he says, "I know that Thou wilt hear me." How simple but how strong this faith. 3. There is also the testimony of an upright conscience. 4. The memory of God's past dealings with him. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The Christian praying to be upheld*:—We cannot ascertain at what period of his life David wrote this prayer. It was probably before his lamentable fall. If so, we are ready to say he must have forgotten it after he had written it, for otherwise his fall could not have happened. But let us make this prayer our own. I. TRUE RELIGION IS A WALKING OR GOING ON IN GOD'S PATHS. Think of a country with many tracks in it perhaps, but without any marked roads or paths; a country like one immense down or waste, where in the main men go hither and thither just as they will. Now this is how most men regard the world and their own condition in it. But God appears and marks out certain ways or paths in this world, and bids us inquire for them and keep to them. And this is true religion—obedience to this Divine call. It is a ceasing to live at random, to live as God dictates. II. THE PRAYER WE HAVE TO CONSIDER. It implies—1. A lively apprehension of the evil consequences of falling. An ordinary man does not care, he knows nothing of the malignity of sin. If for a moment sin has disturbed him by reason of some unusual transgression, the effect has been very shallow, very transient. Not so is it with the traveller in God's ways. He knows how evil and bitter a thing sin is. 2. A consciousness of his proneness to fall. Liability is not a word strong enough. All, even the holiest creatures, are liable to fall—witness Adam and the once holy angels—and even in the holiest places. But in us there is a direct tendency to fall. 3. A belief in the ability and willingness of God to thus hold us up. "Thou wilt hear me, O God," so he says in the next verse. There is such a thing as dwelling, if not too frequently, yet too exclusively on our weakness and danger. This is better than ignorance of them, and much better than knowing them, to be careless about them; but it comes far short of the perfection or completeness of true religion. That sees not alone the evil in us, but also the fulness of help for us which there is in God. Let us think much of the helping hand of God. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH WE MAY EXPECT SUCH A PRAYER AS THIS TO BE ANSWERED. 1. By mercifully removing occasions of falling out of our way. 2. By calling the sustaining graces of His servants into exercise. This a more honourable way for us. 3. By sending such afflictions as are calculated to keep them from falling. 4. By keeping alive a spirit of prayer within us for His upholding. As long as God keeps you prayerful, humbly and earnestly prayerful, be the ground what it may that you go over, you are safe. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The religious course of life sustained*:—Religion is intercourse maintained between God and us. What condescension on the part of God. They lose much who are strangers to Him. Let us observe David, and learn to pray as he prayed. I. SEE HIS COURSE. "My goings." Religion does not allow a man to sit still. All religion is vain unless he is, so to speak, set a-going—unless he says, "I will walk in Thy truth." His goings are in God's paths. 1. Those of His commands. 2. Of His ordinances. 3. Of His dispensations. II. HIS CONCERN RESPECTING THIS COURSE. "Hold up my goings," &c. It is the language—1. Of conviction. He knew the injury that would result from a fall or even a slip in religion. 2. Of apprehension, for he knew his footsteps were prone to slide. 3. And of weakness; he knew he could not keep himself. 4. Of confidence, for he was sure that God could and would hold him up. (*W. Jay.*) *How to walk without slipping*:—In considering the feelings that breathe in this prayer we note that they express—I. A VEHEMENT DESIRE TO WALK IN GOD'S WAYS. There is a sense in which all men desire to walk in God's ways. For they know the consequences of disobedience, how it provokes His anger and involves punishment. They dislike obedience, but they desire its rewards. Like a hireling, they labour at their task, but only for its promised hire. Could they only be assured that they

could get the wages without the work they would gladly leave it alone. But those who have been pardoned through the blood of Jesus, though they have no fear of punishment, yet desire to walk in all the commandments of the Lord, doing what is well-pleasing in His sight. II. A DISTRESSING SENSE OF WEAKNESS IS DISCOVERED AND BEMOANED IN HIMSELF. It is "when he would do good," i.e. when he desires, and in proportion as he desires, to do good that he is conscious of the evil present with him. If he does not much desire to walk in God's ways he will not be much distressed at his failures. But if his desire be vehement it is far otherwise with him. III. THE CRY OF ONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THE LORD IS ABLE AND WILLING TO HOLD HIM UP. It is the cry of faith, not alone of desire. And the lesson of the whole is, that would we be upheld, our cry must be of vehement desire, of deep sense of need, and of firm faith. (*W. Grant.*)

Ver. 8. **Keep me as the apple of the eye.**—*The plea for Divine protection*.—The world is no friend to righteousness; its spirit cannot endure the restraints that holiness imposes upon its workings. Hence the world's hostility to all those who live truly godly lives. To understand the full force of keeping one as the apple of the eye it is necessary to consider first, how the whole eye is protected, sheltered by bones and sinews, opening and closing doors, light-softening and dust-excluding curtains, and then, that the pupil of the eye, located farther in, is protected by guardians equally wonderful and peculiarly its own. There is no other part of the human body so wonderfully protected, and no other part that, when endangered, we so instinctively try to shelter from harm. And so God guards His people as tenderly as we guard the pupil of our eye; yea, as tenderly as He guards the pupil of His own eye. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *The eye, a similitude*.—The man knows something of himself who sincerely offers this plaintive petition, "Keep me." Is there not a sorrowful confession implied? But it implies knowledge of God too. What He is and will do. The keeping desired is that with which men guard the eye. It means, therefore—I. **KEEP ME WITH MANY GUARDS AND PROTECTIONS.** The eye is kept by eye bones, eyelashes, eyelids, which serve as out-works, fences and barricades to protect the pupil of the eye. God has bestowed extraordinary pains upon all that concerns the eye. Sentries keep ward lest it should be imperilled. Whenever it is threatened, with agility so brisk that it seems almost involuntary, the arm is lifted up and the hand is raised to screen it. All the members of the body may be regarded as a patrol for the wardship of the eye. So should we pray to be kept with many protections—providence, grace, ordinances, the Holy Spirit, the angels. II. **WITH CONSTANCY, UNINTERMITTING CONTINUANCE.** The eye is always guarded. Without our thinking of it. If a grain of dust enter, forthwith a watery humour is exuded to carry it away or to dissolve it. The pain is a mercy, for it makes you restless until you get relief. When you fall asleep the curtains fall, the blinds, as it were, drop down, and the windows are shut up securely with lash and lid. So, and in yet other ways, doth the parable of the eye suggest the prayer of the text. Evermore, O Lord, watch over me. Remark here, that at no season is a Christian more in danger than when he has just been in communion with God. The footpads in olden time did not meddle with the farmers as they went to market; it was when they were coming home, and bringing back their money bags full. Our ships of war attacked the Spanish galleons not on their way to but from America, when they knew them to be laden to the water's edge with silver and gold. You need keeping, then, always. III. **FROM LITTLE EVILS, THE DUST AND GRIT OF THIS WORLD.** Your eye needs not to be guarded so much from beams as moles. Be this your prayer, "Keep me from what the world calls little sins." To one, a Puritan, who was offered great preferment if he would but comply with the government demands, it was said, "Others have made long gashes in their consciences: could not you make a little nick in yours?" But those "little nicks" swiftly run to the rending of the conscience from top to bottom. There was an officer who kept in his house a tame leopard which had been born in the house. It had grown up as harmless as a domestic cat. But one day when its master was asleep it gently licked his hand. The creature's tongue passed over a slight but recent wound. A little blood oozed out. The taste roused the demon spirit of the beast at once, and had it not been promptly shot its master's life would have been its victim. When the thief cannot break in at the door himself he puts a boy through the window, and then the great door is speedily opened. IV. **SENSITIVE, TENDER IN HEART, AS THE APPLE OF THE EYE.** God has made it thus sensitive for its own protection. The conscience should be a real indicator: if in good keeping

it would be a wonderful tell-tale. It will startle you from your lethargy, it will arouse you as with an alarm. V. AS THE EYE OUGHT TO BE KEPT. It should be "single," clear, far-seeing. As an ornament, for the beauty of the countenance is in the eye. So should we "adorn the doctrine" and the Church of God. Useful, a genuine Christian will pray to be useful, not like a glass eye, a mere counterfeit. And then, though the remark may seem strange and quaint, I would entreat the Lord to keep me in the head. Solomon has made the shrewd remark, "The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness." I would give this a spiritual turn, and ask to be kept in Christ Jesus. Of what use were the eye of a man if not in the head? And what we, apart from Christ? There are some to whom this prayer is nothing, for they are not Christ's. Let your prayer be, "Lord, save me, or I perish." Once saved, you may pray to be kept. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Two Bible emblems*:—God's Word and works, the two great sources of our knowledge of God. When we want to get clear and vivid conception of any truth we employ analogy and institute comparison, and say it is "as" or "like" some object in nature. Text an illustration of this. It means—I. THAT THE ROYAL PSALMIST PRAYS TO BE DIVINELY PROTECTED. He did not possess all our modern knowledge of the anatomy of the eye, but he must have known much or he could not have penned this prayer. Of all the organs of the body the eye is the most delicate and precious, and is protected by the most wonderful and elaborate contrivances. The eyes are the sentinels of the body, and keep constant guard over it. They are the windows through which the soul looks out upon all things within its range. They are closely connected with the brain, and by a mysterious telegraphy of nerves convey to the brain knowledge of what is passing in the outer world. The eyes are like citizens within the entrenchments of a fortified town, surrounded by outworks, fences, and barricades. And the arms are like two warders to defend them. Note some of their protections. A protruding socket, like a wall around it: with overhanging brow to carry off drops of perspiration; with eyelashes to guard against dust and insects; with lids that automatically close at the approach of danger; with glands which secrete tears that clean and lubricate the ball of the eye; with beds, cushion like for their softness, upon which they repose and revolve with safety. All these and many more show how carefully God keeps the apple of the eye, and help us to see how David desired that God would keep him. II. AND HE WOULD BE DIVINELY PRESERVED. "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings." This emblem, like the former, is exceedingly suggestive. There may be reference to the wings of the cherubim which were the symbol of God's presence in the tabernacle of old. David had ardent love for the house of God, he even envied the sparrows that built their nests near God's altar. In the time of trouble he would be hidden in God's pavilion, in the secret place of the tabernacle; and there, hiding as under the wings of the cherubim, he would find a shelter and a home. (*F. W. Brown.*)

Ver. 10. They are inclosed in their own fat.—*A figure for self-complacency*:—To be inclosed in one's own fat means, to be wrapped up in pride and self-complacency, the effect upon weak and ignoble minds of worldly prosperity. It is said that the purely fatty part of the human body, having no nerves of sensation, can be cut and pierced without experiencing any feeling of pain. Hence, in Scripture phraseology, to say that one's heart is fat is equivalent to saying that it is hard and insensible, void of moral and sympathetic feeling, and not to be affected by any appeal made to its pity or sense of right. It indicates a haughtiness and insolence of bearing towards others that is hard to be borne by them. Alas! how a little worldly elevation sometimes changes the best character into the worst! How it renders the man proud who before was humble; the heart hard that before was tender! To be delivered from the tender mercies of mindless wealth, of heartless prosperity, is a prayer that others besides David have breathed into the ear of Divine mercy. It was not the poor, but the proud, the prosperous, the high in station and authority, that chased the Son of God to the Cross, and reviled Him there. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

Vers. 14, 15. Which have their portion in this life.—*The uncertainty of worldly prosperity*:—Like many other passages (such as Job xxi. 7-13; Psa. lxxiii. 12), these verses clearly show how little "the old Fathers looked," or indeed could have looked, "only for transitory promises." While they held, and rightly held, that under the general law of God's providence happiness should follow obedience to the will of Him who made and guides all things, they yet recognised the disturbing influence of evil



in the world, through which the unrighteous prosper, having to the full the only portion they care for (comp. Matt. vi. 2-5; Luke xvi. 25), leaving wealth and fame to their children. At times this was to them a sore trial of faith (Psa. lxxiii. 3), sorer than to us who have the clear vision of the future life. But they felt that far above this outward prosperity was that which the worldly cannot have, the communion with God, in itself the eternal life of the soul. The sense of ver. 15 cannot be doubtful. David knows that now "he shall behold the presence of God in righteousness," and in it have the higher spiritual life. Therefore (as in Psa. xvi. 9, 10) he draws the inference which our Lord Himself justifies, that death cannot break the tie of this communion; therefore that he shall awake in the image of God, and, so awaking, shall be "satisfied with it," possessing it in the fulness which on earth he can only desire and long for (comp. 1 John iii. 1, 2). All other explanations than this sin against the whole spirit of the passage, and could never have been thought of except to support the false conclusion that, because the knowledge of a future life in heaven was not unchequered by doubt in the saints of old, therefore it had no flashes of brightness and reality. (*Alfred Barry, D.D.*) *The worldly man's portion*.—The world is at total enmity with God. Its spirit, maxims, and pursuits are at utter variance with the laws and spirit of God. I. DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER. Among the signs and marks is—1. Unregeneracy. 2. They are distinguished for worldly principles. 3. Their maxims are worldly. 4. They are distinguished by their associations; 5. By the unvarying tenor of their pursuits; 6. By their worldly affections and delights. II. THE PORTION THE WORLD CONFERS UPON THEM. They do not serve the world for nought. The chief reason why it does not satisfy is—1. Because it is unsuitable. The ethereal mind must have ethereal enjoyments. The soul was made for God and spiritual things. 2. This portion is only a present one. 3. It is uncertain. 4. It is a ruinous portion. If a man will make the world his portion he cannot have Christ's salvation, God's favour, or eternal life. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Men who flourish on carrion*.—There was a famine in the land. All birds and beasts, with the exception of the crows and vultures, and a few others of a similar species, looked ravenous and emaciated. Even the lion lay before his den so reduced by starvation as to be unable to hunt. A giraffe with drooping head ventured to approach him. "Sire," said he, "have you observed the full crops and plump appearance of yonder vultures? Can you tell us the secret of their prosperity in these hard times?" The lion groaned, "It is as great a mystery to me as to you. But see! an eagle approaches this way, pray ask his opinion." The eagle willingly stopped in his weary flight. And in reply to their question simply said, "I know their secret, but I mistake you, indeed, if you will be the happier for hearing it. If you would flourish as they flourish, you must bring your mind to eat carrion, and plenty of it." (*Andrew Griffen.*) *Men who have their portion in this life*.—I have seen men so carried away with the game of chance into which they have plunged on ship-board that they quite forgot the goal for which the ship was shaping. They would scarcely lift their head a moment to look for land and port and home. Never suffer yourself to be swept along the tide of rushing years like the dumb creatures packed into cattle ships. Some men are hurried on to the goal without any thought or care for what is before them, and land upon an anathema which can never be reversed. (*T. G. Selby.*) *The disappointment of men who seek satisfaction in earthly treasure*.—Meditating at a window, in a sort of day-dream, a fly continued to pass before me. Mechanically I sought to catch it. I put my finger quickly to the pane, but the fly was gone. I followed it and clapped my hand on the very spot it occupied, but I had not taken it. Yet there it was just under my hand. Why had I failed? Excellent reason, the insect was on the other side of the glass. Ye sons of men who seek pleasure in the things of this world, ye must miss it; even when it seems within your grasp ye cannot reach it. Happiness is not to be found on your side of Christ and the new birth, except in seeming. Ye are victims of a delusion, your chase is vanity, your end will be disappointment. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The city youth*.—To every young man there comes sooner or later the brief but startling message, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." You cannot always abide in the house of your childhood. But such a call to go forth is very serious. A thoughtful young fellow, who is in a house of business in the city, comes to me for a little conversation; he tells me of his religious difficulties, of his inward conflicts and his desire to live a Christian life; and ere we part I say to him, "Now, how many in your establishment seem to be at all seriously inclined?" How many in that huge drapery business? How many in

that bank? How many in that workshop? Ten to one his reply is, "There is just one I know of that is a real Christian"; or, "Just two or three that take any interest in these things." It is the old story, "Few there be that find it." Now I ask you, "To which group do you wish to belong?" If to the men of the world, I don't know what brought you here, nor have I any message for you; but if to the men of God, then I want to speak to you. Now, by "the men of the world" is not meant merely a shrewd, sagacious person, but one who is a mere earthworm, sinful, sordid, and greedy of gain, whose only thought is to make money and feather his nest well. Think—I. OF THESE MEN OF THE WORLD AND THEIR PORTION. It is a great mistake to think that as soon as you are purse rich you will be heart rich. There is many a Midas in this city to-day, at whose touch everything seems to turn into gold, who would frankly tell you he had a far lighter heart when, as a young clerk, he was earning £60 or £80 a year. The wealthy Sir Charles Flower only spoke for many a rich man like himself when, to a beggar who asked him for money to get a piece of bread, he said, "I would gladly give you a sovereign if you would give me your appetite." Riches do make happy; but it is not the riches of the pocket, but the riches of the mind and heart. The riches of taste, of culture, of affection, and, above all, the riches of God's grace. But men do not believe this. They hear it said, and then seek after riches as if riches were everything and the Bible all untrue. But let such remember that after all, let them gain what they may, it is only "a portion for this life." Not a farthing can you take to the other side of the grave. It will be with you as with the partridge (Jerem. xvii. 11). Men of the world, go you over your portion and tick off each particular, and say, "This, this, must be left behind." Lord Chesterfield said, "I have run the silly rounds of business and of pleasure, and I have done with them all. I look back on all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which opium produces, and I have no wish to repeat the nauseous dose." Yes, "a portion in this life" is but a poor unsatisfying portion at the best. II. THE CONTRAST: THE MAN OF GOD AND HIS PORTION. "As for me," says David in the next verse, "I will behold Thy face," &c. He speaks of himself as quite an exception, a rare case amid the common throng. But these are the happiest men after all. David's heart was set on God. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. I have a goodly heritage." He meant that not one of them was so happy as he. See David's secret of happiness. 1. "I will behold Thy face in righteousness." Yes, the first secret of a happy life is to get right with God. I know many of you feel this to be true. Then surrender yourselves to Him now. It will introduce us to a new and most blessed experience. As that thoughtful and devout French believer, Lacordaire, wrote, speaking of his own conversion, "He who has never known such a time has not fully realised life. Once a real Christian, the world did not vanish before my eyes; it rather assumed nobler proportions, as I myself did. I began to see therein a sufferer needing help; a mighty misfortune resulting from all the sorrows of ages past and to come; and I could imagine nothing comparable to the happiness of ministering to it, with the help of the Cross and the Gospel of Christ." 2. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." No doubt the morning of the resurrection is mainly meant here. But we may take the awaking as telling of each morning's awakening, and of a prospect which will satisfy your soul. Oh, tell me, have your eyelids ever opened with the earthly dawn, and found you saying, with the first moments of returning consciousness, "I am satisfied"? Rather, have not care, and depression, and a feeling of life's monotony weighed down your own spirit, as another day called you forth to its duty and routine? Ah, you want something nobler than the prospect of gain to give a sparkle and a beauty to life, and to make the heart truly glad; and that nobler thing is the prospect of being like God. This is the prospect that cheers a true Christian, "We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (*J. Thain Davidson, D.D.*) *Men of the world* :—David prays to be delivered from the wicked, that he might not fall under their power, nor be numbered with them as "men of the world which have," &c. Now note—I. WICKED MEN MAY HAVE A LARGE PORTION IN THIS LIFE. God deals thus with them—1. To prove the extent and kindness of His providence; 2. And that judgment is His strange work, and how disingenuous is the conduct of the wicked whom He daily loadeth with benefits. 3. Wicked men, in the hand of Providence, may do some services for God or His people, and for this He will bless them (Ezek. xxix. 18, 19; 2 Kings x. 30). 4. Because they choose their portion here and He lets them take it, and therein all they shall have. 5. For judgment, since wealth will surely corrupt them yet more. 6. To instruct the righteous—(1) In the evil of their

own hearts, that they cannot trust them: they will promise and vow what they will do if they become rich, but they never do it. (2) How little value the things of the world are in God's sight, for God gives them often plentifully to His enemies. (3) That our present condition is no true prophecy of our future. Neither when we are rich or poor. (4) That there is something far better for them. They "shall behold God's face," &c. (5) That they must be like God, who does good to His enemies and them that hate Him (Matt. v. 44, 45). II. LIVING AND DYING, WHAT THE WICKED HAVE HERE IS THEIR ALL. 1. By their choice, they think this world best. 2. Their names are therefore written in earth as limited to it. 3. They are only fit for a portion in this life; and 4. They have abused their portion here, and shall never be tried with any other. 5. They are not the children of God by faith in Christ. 6. Having desired no more than the world, there is no more for them: only misery. III. UPON WHAT ACCOUNTS THEIR CONDITION MAY BE SAID TO BE MISERABLE. It is so because—1. They hold their portion by so uncertain a tenure. 2. Without the added joy of the love of God. 3. And without Christ. 4. Without foundation for solid peace and comfort. For their sins are unpardoned; conscience alarms; the secret arm of God is on them (Deut. xxviii. 17). Then 5. Their prosperity tends to their destruction, leading them to forgetfulness both of God and heaven. 6. And will be succeeded by such awful misery. IV. WHENCE IS IT THAT SAINTS RECKON IT TO BE SO? Because—1. They have found the world to be vanity and vexation of spirit. 2. And they see the end of all things approaching. But 3. They look by faith to another and ever-enduring world. Application: 1. With what certainty may we infer a day of judgment from the wicked having now so large a share of outward good, whilst some of the heirs of heaven have scarce where to lay their heads. 2. They reckon without looking to the end who envy the men of the world (Psa. lxxiii. 18). 3. What reason have we to pity those on whom Christ's words will fall in their full weight (Luke vi. 24). (*D. Wilcox.*)

Ver. 15. **I will behold Thy face in righteousness.**—*The vision of the face:—*  
**I. THE VISION OF THE FACE OF GOD.** 1. The object of this vision: "Thy face." (1) A sensible glory: such a glory was seen by Moses at Sinai, afterwards in the tabernacle, and at the transfiguration. (2) An intellectual glory: glory is resplendent excellency, real worth made conspicuous. This glory is the conspicuous lustre of Divine perfections. 2. The act of beholding: glory has a peculiar respect to the power of seeing. Sight is the most perfect sense: noble, comprehensive, quick and sprightly. The act of the mind is called seeing. The blessed shall have the glory of God so presented as "to know as they are known." II. **THE SOUL'S PARTICIPATION OF HIS LIKENESS.** How strange an errand hath the Gospel in the world, to transform men and make them like God. 1. There is a sense in which we cannot be like God. God will endure no such imitation of Him as to be rivalled in the point of His Godhead (Ezek. xxviii. 6–10). 2. There is a just and laudable imitation of God: we are to be imitators of God (Eph. v. 1). 3. Man has already a likeness to God: the material world represents Him, as a house the builder; spiritual beings, as a child the father: others carry His footsteps, these His image. 4. There is a natural image of God in the soul of man, inseparable from it, its spiritual immortal nature, its intellectual and elective powers are the image of the same powers in God. There is also a moral likeness, wisdom, mercy, truth, righteousness, holiness. 5. Assimilation to God in moral perfections conduces to the soul's satisfaction and blessedness: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." How great a hope is this! Were the dust of the earth turned into stars in the firmament, what could equal the greatness and wonder of this mighty change. III. **THE RESULTING SATISFACTION:** the soul's rest in God, its perfect enjoyment of the most perfect good, the perfecting of its desires in delight or joy. Desire is love in motion, delight love in rest. It is a rational, voluntary, pleasant, active rest: action about the end shall be perpetuated, though action towards it ceases. It is the rest of hope perfected in fruition. (*John Howe.*) *Who has the best of it?*—This Psalm is called a prayer, and how appropriately. It is such as comes only out of a sufferer's heart. We owe our whole salvation to Christ, but, secondarily, we receive much through the sufferings of men. The world will never know, till its whole history is reviewed and all its mysteries explained, how much instruction, comfort, incitement have flowed from the trials and sufferings of this one man. In this respect David and Paul have done more for the race than perhaps any two men who ever lived. Their great souls were often and heavily pressed by adversities and afflictions, in order that sweet wine of comfort and strength to others



might flow from them. I. THIS VERSE IS THE MOUNT OF VICTORY. The dust of the battle plain is passed over, the perplexities of life left, and here we have a clear prevision of a perfect solution, and some realisation of it also. The verse does not refer exclusively to the awaking from the sleep of death at the resurrection; nor to the perfect moral likeness of God and the beatific vision which we shall then enjoy. This is not the first interpretation that suggests itself, and ought not, however true, to be taken as its exclusive meaning. II. WHAT, THEN, IS THE CASE? The nature of it is sounded out in the very first words of the Psalm. "Hear the right, O Lord!" It is a case of conflict as between him and other men. It is the great struggle of this life in which many are engaged; in which, if we judge simply by outward appearances, some gain a very considerable and striking advantage over others. They seem to have the best of it. To David the conflict at this time was hot and searching, with a great deal of personality in it. He speaks of "the wicked that oppress"; of "deadly enemies compassing him about"; of men who "spoke proudly with their mouth"; of men "inclosed in their own fat"—so well-fed, so prosperous, so like prize men were they;—of others "lurking like the young lion in secret places, greedy for the prey"—ready to grasp advantage, ready to spring on him with their teeth. Then he describes their character generally, in the fourteenth verse, in language which applies to one age almost as much as to another. He calls them "men of the world, which have their portion in this life: whose belly is filled with hid treasure"—with the things they gather, and hoard, and store away. Men, too, who keep and bequeath to their children what they have gathered. These were the men against whom David felt himself striving; he felt that if they were right and happy, he must be wrong and miserable, and *vice versa*. But he was quite sure that he was right and not they, and that their misery was coming. Hence he says, "As for me, I shall be satisfied," &c. He would awake day by day, when the present sorrow had passed, as he knew it would, to see God's beautiful likeness and to have it in a measure in himself. With this he would be satisfied. This would be victory even now. To be made and kept righteous, to see God in my life, His face in my prayers, and to watch His image forming in my soul: this is to win the battle. I will complain no more! I am satisfied! Now, this is just—III. THE JUDGMENT WE OUGHT TO FORM IN OUR OWN CASE. It is a question always on trial, and always coming to some settlement—How is the best of life to be found? How shall we taste the sweetness, and gather the flower, and wear the crown, and say with joy, self-respect, and full conviction, "This it is to be a man"? Here, on the one hand, are "the men of the world." David tells us, and we know, what they are in their aims, motives, and ways, and in their successes. They get wealth, position, name, influence, and some of them a considerable measure of low happiness and contentment. See, this is the man, coming out of his chamber in the morning after sound sleep, radiant and healthy. And these are his children, to not one of whom he has ever named seriously the name of God, but to each of whom he will probably leave a good deal of money. And these are his gardens and parks, fair to the eye, and fruitful in their season. And this is his chariot, with the swift horses to bear him to the city. And in the city, when he comes, see how he is received, and what a power he is! How with his pen he can remove ships to the far ocean, and open railways on the land! And he can speak, and "make the worse appear the better reason"; and, as with magician's wand, raise success out of failure itself. Now take a simple Christian man, who just has enough and little over, who has no name in the public, who is known but to a small circle, who can cheer a fellow-pilgrim here and there, and offer a prayer at a sick bed. How small he seems in the common estimation beside this great "man of the world." "The simple man is very well in his own place and way, and it is a good thing for him that he has the consolations of religion and the hopes of the future life to cheer him amid the struggles and hardships of his lot. But it cannot be said that his lot, even with these consolations, is at all to be compared with that of the other man in this life. After this life is over his lot will be better, but here it is worse." "No," says the text; "it is better now, and here. He is the great man who is good. He is the happy man who sees the face of God. He is the noble man who strives after righteousness, and who satisfies himself with the Divine likeness in his soul." IV. IT CONCERNS US MUCH TO GET AND KEEP THIS JUDGMENT OF THINGS. It needs an effort. It is an advanced lesson in Christian living. People stop short of it, and many miss it habitually. As when they conjecture that worldly men have a great deal of inward misery which they never tell—fear, guilt, and apprehension of danger haunting them like ghosts. Now, this may be true of some, but certainly not of

all, nor most. They are well satisfied, and have no misgivings. But what then? Are they who are thus satisfied better off than the devout, struggling, praying servant of God? How mean of us to think so. In reality there is no comparison between the two. The tried Christian in full view of the prosperous and happy man of the world can say, "As for me, I behold Thy face in righteousness. I am satisfied with Thy likeness." Then, again, we say that "compensation is coming—that the next life will rectify all." That also is true. But that is not "the present truth." The present truth is, that we have the advantage now; that we do not need to wait for the compensation; that godliness is better than ungodliness all the world over; that the face of God shining down upon a man is the supreme felicity and the last ideal; and that to awake morning by morning and realise the growing likeness of God in our spirits is joy like that of heaven. But if a man send his heart hankering after the joys of a life to come because he thinks he has not his due here, and that then and there it will be made up to him, what is this but worldliness after all? But if, on the other hand, any man loves the light of God's face more than every visible creature and thing, and strives after His righteousness by the aids of His grace, and puts on His likeness as dress and beauty, and "awakes" in it now and again to his thankful joy and satisfaction, saying, "This it is to live! let this blessed experience grow in me until it blooms and brightens into heaven"—then he may take a text like this and follow its most spiritual suggestions, and lift it to its last and highest applications, make it speak the resurrection from the dead, the appearance in heaven, the immortal life. (*Anon.*)

*The vision of visions:*—The mind of man is invisible, yet its workings are often evident in the changes of the countenance. Thus the playful smile indicates pleasure; the clouded brow, wrath. In like manner, though the mind of God is invisible, yet are His attributes variously manifested. I. THE FACE OF GOD IS ANY EXPRESSION OF HIS CHARACTER. 1. The Shekinah, therefore, is styled His face. (1) Thus Moses is said to have entreated the face of Jehovah when he interceded for Israel amid the storm and flame in which God descended upon Sinai (Exod. xxxii. 11, marg; see also xxxiii. 11). (2) So Aaron, after gazing upon those awful involutions of the glory between the cherubim, came forth and blessed the people, invoking for them the spiritual reality of what he had seen in symbol (Numb. vi. 24-26). (3) The invocations, "Lift up Thy countenance," "Cause Thy face to shine," and such like, of frequent occurrence, allude to the cloud of glory. 2. Christ is pre-eminently the face of Jehovah. (1) Within the cloud there was a radiant human form which is distinguished as the "Similitude of the Lord" (Numb. xii. 8; Ezek. i. 26). This adumbrated the taking up of the manhood into the Godhead in the Incarnation. (2) Christ is anticipated in prophecy as the "Glory of the Lord to be revealed," and in the fulfilment He is described as the "Face of the Lord" (Isa. xl. 1-3; Luke i. 76). (3) Christ is pre-eminently the face or expression of the character of God as His most perfect Revealer (John xiv. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3). II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OUR QUALIFICATION FOR BEHOLDING THE FACE OF GOD. 1. God requires in us this qualification. No wonder, seeing the mire of worldliness clings to us, that we fail to experience as we might the spiritual manifestations of the Son of God (John xiv. 21; Eph. i. 17, 18). Divine manifestations are terrible to the unrighteous. When God "looked out" from the cloud upon the Egyptians, that was the signal for their destruction. "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment" (Psa. i. 4-6; Rev. vi. 16, 17). 2. Righteousness is attainable through faith. (1) Of this we have a notable illustration in the history of the first family. Cain laments his excommunication from the place of the Presence—"From Thy face shall I be hid" (Gen. iii. 24, iv. 3-14). (2) The history of Jacob wrestling is an example no less appropriate (Gen. xxxii. 24-30). He called the place of his triumph Peniel, or the Face of God. III. FRUITION WILL BE PERFECTED IN HEAVEN. 1. The soul cannot be satisfied on earth. 2. Satisfaction is promised in the resurrection. (*J. A. Macdonald.*)

*The vision of the face:*—The opening phrase of this verse is expressive of a noble singularity. "As for me." It is the utterance of moral manhood. The Psalmist has been speaking of those who have their portion in this life, and he says, "Be the animals that you are! As for me, I will seek higher things. As a being made in the image of God, I will find my satisfactions in contemplation of and assimilation to that image." "As for me" is the language of true soul nobility. And there are times when we too must dare to utter it, if we would be true to our higher nature and count for anything in the world. The men of the period when this Psalm was written had very dim and

vague notions of immortality. With them a life beyond the grave was but a fitful hope or a sublime peradventure, and expressions such as this are to be interpreted of the present life and experience, and not of the heavenly state. The vision of the Divine face here anticipated is not the beatific vision after death, or that only in a very secondary and shadowy sense, but the daily experience of the earthly life. The Psalm is poetry, couched in poetical imagery. Life to the Psalmist would be worth living just in the proportion in which he could have the sight of God. What, then, did he mean by the Divine face? The more enlightened prophets and lawgivers of old had a profound sense of the danger of thinking of God otherwise than in His spiritual relations to men. Hence the prohibition to make any pictorial image or statuesque representation of Deity. Yet there is a very real meaning in this expression, "the face of God," and it may be a very real vision to us all. In the face, character is pre-eminently revealed. The face is the man. Look into the face and you read the soul. The play of all the affections is there. There are faces that are the rendezvous of all the virtues. The face of God then stands for the nature of God; and the Psalmist's anticipation of beholding that face meant the prospect of his happy realisation of the Divine gentleness, strength, and righteousness. It is men's faces that are the face of God. As His spiritual qualities are bodied forth in men's lives, so may we see Divine lineaments in the features of men. We are taught to behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The true glory of God is in His moral attributes, and Christ incarnated those Divine qualities in His nature. Whoso looked up into His face saw there the glory and the beauty of the Ineffable; and so many a human countenance, if not *the* face, is *a* face of God: for the radiance of a Divine love, the lustre of a Divine purity, the patience of a Divine charity, the tenderness of a Divine sympathy is there. Each of these is a lineament of Deity. The dying Bunsen, as he looked up into the eyes of his wife bending over him, said, "In thy face have I seen the Eternal." Few artists have dared to essay the Divine form and features. But I once saw in the gallery at Florence a picture which very much struck me, and the memory of it has been with me ever since. It was by Carlo Dolci, and entitled "L'Eterno Padre,"—the Eternal Father. It was a bold and unconventional conception. There was no attempt to deify the figure. It was just a man's form and face, and not only that, but the face was full of human grief and misery. An aspect of ineffable sadness was in the eyes, and the whole countenance wore an expression of infinite sorrow and solicitude. And surely there must be an unutterable sorrow at the heart of the world! This vision of the face, then—when are we to see it? To-morrow. "I shall be satisfied when I awake"—that is, to-morrow morning, every morning, this morning. Include in the Psalmist's expression the conception of the Divine nearness. To see a face, you must be near the person. Near, to faith's apprehension, is the Divine presence. Something more than vicinity is meant. Intimacy of fellowship is implied. Familiar interchange of thought and affection. There is another thought hinted by the figure of the face, namely, propitiousness. When he speaks of beholding the face of God, it is in the confidence that God is his friend and not his enemy. Oriental monarchs only showed the face to those to whom they intended to be clement and gracious. The Psalmist was happy in the conviction that, humbly endeavouring to walk in the ways of righteousness, he could look even God in the face, and that His face would not be turned away. . . . There are two elements in this satisfaction. 1. The perception of the Divine image. 2. The assimilation to that image. In contemplating that likeness we grow into it. (*J. Halsey.*) *The Christian's prospect*:—"A Christian is the highest style of man," and the noblest work of God. The text tells of his high and exalted state of happiness which he shall obtain in the heavenly world. It consists in—I. THE FULL VISION OF THE DIVINE GLORY. Note—1. The grandeur of the vision. 2. The manner of it. "In righteousness," that is, the righteousness of Christ. 3. The certainty of it. Scripture and experience assure us of it. II. THE COMPLETE RESEMBLANCE TO THE DIVINE IMAGE. 1. The glorious expectation—to be like our Saviour and our God. 2. The period of accomplishment. "When I awake," that is, on the resurrection morn. 3. The satisfaction obtained. Conclusion: See 1. The value of the soul. 2. The vanity of the world. 3. The excellence of religion. (*Ebenezer Temple.*) *Beholding God's face*:—This is the language—1. Of a man whose mind is made up, who has decided for himself. "As for me"—let others do as they will. 2. Of a man rising in life, and with great prospects before him. He had looked beyond this world, though he was to rise therein. 3. Of a Jew. For in Judah was God known; His name was



great in Israel. And though their knowledge was dim, it was real; and here is an outlook to the blessed future life. I. THE BEHOLDING OF GOD'S FACE MEANT THE ENJOYMENT OF HIS FAVOUR. This its constant meaning. And in heaven "They shall see His face." All that means we cannot know now, but this one thing we know—II. HOW IT WILL BE REALISED. It will be in and through righteousness. For merit and meetness this is needed. Our title to behold God's face must be righteousness, and that we have in Christ. Our meetness and preparedness for it is righteousness, and this the Holy Spirit will work in us. No one longs for the Christian heaven but the Christian soul. (*William Jay.*) *The believer's vision:*—I. WHAT THE PSALMIST MEANS BY "IN RIGHTEOUSNESS." 1. Speak of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves everything in it necessary to deliver and to save man for ever and ever. The passive obedience closed the gates of hell; his active obedience opened those of heaven. Connected with this righteousness there must necessarily be another. Rectitude of principle. If ever we behold the face of God, either here or hereafter, in triumph, we must behold it in the image as well as in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. II. THE BELIEVER'S VISION OF DEITY. God intended we should, even in this life, have very glorious views of His perfections. The face is frequently an index to the bosom. By the face is sometimes meant the loving-kindness of the Lord. III. THE BELIEVER'S PROSPECTIVE VIEW. He is now fully satisfied with his God, but dissatisfied with his little knowledge of Him and his little love to Him. The discipline of life is to end in fixing the full face of His child on Himself. Application: 1. We must have righteousness in principle as well as the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. 2. Are there any who are satisfied with the creature? 3. Are there any who would make the creature their portion for ever? 4. Address those who have God for their portion. (*W. Howells.*) *The hope of future bliss:*—It would be difficult to say to which the Gospel owes most, to its friends or to its enemies. For when they have persecuted Christ's servants they have scattered them abroad, so that they have gone everywhere preaching the Word. Jesus Christ would never have preached many of His discourses had not His foes compelled Him to answer them. So with the Book of Psalms. Had not David been sorely tried, we should have missed very many of these holy songs. This Psalm is one of those which had never been written but for his great trouble. Our text tells of his consolation in the hope of future bliss. We note—I. THE SPIRIT OF THE TEXT. It breathes the spirit of one who is—1. Entirely free from envy. The wicked may do as they will, but I envy them not. "As for me, I," &c. 2. Looking into the future. "I shall be satisfied." It has nothing to do with the present. He looks beyond the grave to another world. He who lives in the present is a fool; but wise men are content to look after future things. When Milton wrote his *Paradise Lost* he might know, perhaps, that he should have little fame in his lifetime; but he said, "I shall be honoured when my head shall sleep in the grave." There are many things that we never hope to be rewarded for here, but we shall be by and by. Christian, live in the future. 3. Full of faith. There is no "perhaps" about his words. "I will behold"; "I shall be satisfied." And there are many of God's people who can say the like. But such must expect to have trouble, for God never gives strong faith without fiery trial. He will not make you a mighty warrior if He does not intend to try your skill in battle. God's swords must be used. The old Toledo blades of heaven must be snitten against the armour of the evil one, and yet they shall not break. II. THE MATTER OF THIS PASSAGE. 1. David expected to behold God's face. We have seen His hand in both awful and gentle forms. And we have heard God's voice; but the vision of God, what must that be? It is said of the temple of Diana, that it was so splendidly decorated with gold, and so bright and shining, that a porter at the door always said to every one that entered, "Take heed to your eyes; you will be struck with blindness unless you take heed to your eyes." But, oh! that view of glory. Who can know what it is to see God's face? 2. There was a peculiar sweetness mixed with this joy. For he should behold God's face "in righteousness." How our sins have dimmed our sight, that we could not get a clear prospect of Jesus. But yonder we shall see Him as He is. 3. And there will be satisfaction. "I shall be satisfied." Imagination, intellect, memory, hope—all will be satisfied. 4. But when shall this satisfaction be? "When I awake in Thy likeness." Not till then. On the resurrection morn, when complete in soul and body, they will awake. Their bodies till then are in their graves. But then they shall be restored. When a Roman conqueror had been at war, and won great victories, he would very likely come back with his soldiers, enter

into his house and enjoy himself till the next day, when he would go out of the city and then come in again in triumph. Now the saints, as it were, steal into heaven without their bodies; but on the last day, when their bodies wake up, they will enter in their triumphal chariots; and the body is to be in the likeness of Christ. The spirit already is. III. HERE IS A VERY SAD CONTRAST IMPLIED. We are all together now, undivided; but the great dividing day will come when Christ, the Judge, shall welcome His own people, but with lifted sword shall sweep the wicked into the bottomless pit. But now, whosoever will may be saved. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) I shall be satisfied.—*The satisfaction of the future*.—I. THE SATISFACTION OF THE FUTURE IS OFTEN THE SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN IN THE PRESENT. 1. This fact explains the anomaly of the Christian's earthly experience. The Christian experience is not to be ascertained by outward circumstances and conditions. 2. This fact reveals the secret of the Christian's strength. II. THE SATISFACTION OF THE FUTURE CONSISTS IN A PARTICIPATION IN THE DIVINE LIKENESS. 1. The original type of the soul is to be found in God. Had we retained our pristine glory we should not have had to mourn the misery and emptiness of earth. It is the loss of purity that has reduced us so low, and made us so degraded. The soul can never be satisfied but in the complete restoration of the Divine likeness. The true Christian's most exalted desire is, to resemble Christ in moral character here, and to be like Him in heaven. III. THE DIVINE LIKENESS IS COMMUNICATED TO THE SOUL THROUGH THE VISION OF CHRIST. By contemplating the glory of Christ's character we become changed into His image. 1. The Divine vision assimilates to the Divine likeness. 2. When the Divine vision is perfect the Christian's happiness will be complete. (*Homilist.*)

*Satisfaction*.—This Psalm is called simply a *prayer*, which is the oldest and most comprehensive name of the Psalms. But it is the prayer of one who is in trouble. Men never pray so frequently and so fervently as then. Doubtless it is David who thus prays, and the Psalm agrees, almost line for line, with the circumstances in which he was placed when pursued by Saul in the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. xxiii. 25). I. THAT THERE IS NO SATISFACTION IN THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD. Men there were who had their portion in this life; but David did not covet their portion, for he knew that they were not really satisfied. There are such men still, but that they are not satisfied is certain. 1. From the nature of the world itself. For what is it apart from God? It is a vain delusion, an empty show, a shadow that passes quickly away (Eccles. vi. 1-12). Momentary pleasure it gives, but not satisfaction, not contentment, not repose. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, and hence men flit about from one object to another, never resting anywhere long, and always desiring something which they do not possess. Bitter disappointment is the lot of all who seek satisfaction in merely temporal things. 2. From the nature of the human mind. God has made us for Himself. Our capacities are large almost to infinity. We aspire after the highest good. How, then, can we be satisfied with things temporal and vain? II. SATISFACTION IS REALISED IN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND IN THE POSSESSION OF TRUE RELIGION. 1. Religion satisfies the intellect. Man is a creature of mind. He can think, reflect, and reason; and in the exercise of his mental powers he finds some of his richest pleasures. But where will he find subjects for thought so noble and so elevating as in the mysteries of revelation? Nature, science, philosophy will no doubt furnish him with many such subjects; but unless his mind is a strong and vigorous one they will often prove too difficult for him to understand. In Divine revelation, on the other hand, there are shallows in which a child may wade, whilst there are depths in which a philosopher may swim. 2. Religion satisfies the conscience. Man is a moral and responsible being; but he knows that he is a guilty one, and the monitor within condemns him for his violations of the law of God. What can calm it! what can satisfy it? Here the world is utterly powerless. 3. Religion satisfies the heart. Man is an emotional being. He is not a statue, or an automaton, or a curious piece of mechanism. He is not a cold intellectual being incapable of feeling, incapable of love. He is possessed of affections of the noblest kind, and he can only be happy where they are in active play. But on what object can he place them? He may love, and ought to love, his friends, his kindred, and his fellow-men; but any one of these may be torn from his embrace, and then how lonely does his heart become. Divine revelation points to another object of affection—to Christ Jesus our Lord, and when the heart reposes in Him it is satisfied indeed (Sol. Song i. 14-16; Eph. iii. 17-19). III. But our text goes further, and we observe that FULL SATISFACTION WILL BE REALISED WHEN WE AWAKE WITH GOD'S LIKENESS! The eye

will be satisfied with seeing, for it will see the King in His glory (Isa. xxxiii. 17; 1 John ii. 2). The ear will be satisfied with hearing, for it will hear the music of the heavenly choir (Rev. v. 11-14, xiv. 2, xv. 2, 3). The intellect will be satisfied in knowing, for it will comprehend the grandest mysteries of nature, providence, and grace. The soul—the whole being—will be satisfied with what it feels and loves. It will love throughout eternity the Triune God. (*Thornley Smith.*)

*Satisfaction*:—Two kinds of satisfaction are brought to view in this verse.

**I. THE NATURAL SATISFACTION.** The aim, the current of desires is limited to things of this life. There is danger of mistaking dissatisfaction with our earthly lot for genuine repentance. Looking for a good time in heaven, one may overlook the indispensable preparation. **II. THE SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION.** Dr. Bushnell says, "If your feeling reaches after heaven, and your longings are thitherward; if you love and long for it, because chiefly of its purity; loosened from this world, not by your weariness and disgusts, which all men suffer, but by the positive affinities of your heart for what is best and purest above, this also is a powerful token of growing purification." Compare the two satisfactions; how do they look? Compare Byron's "canker and the grief" with Paul's "I have fought a good fight . . . henceforth," &c. This deep satisfaction made it possible for the once timid Peter to take the lead in the warfare in behalf of this spiritual kingdom that now extends to the ends of the earth. It gave him, and all martyrs since, that sublime patience whose persistence no dungeon walls, nor rack, nor faggot could subdue. It is a peace the world cannot give nor take away. (*C. M. Jones.*)

*The Christian's completed life*:—Men often speak and live better than they know. The text is prophetic and far-reaching in significance. It suggests—

**I. THE POWER AND NATURE OF CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.** Soul-rest comes from God alone. Nothing can afford the soul repose save its union with Christ in God. In vain do we look to the world for satisfaction. How transitory and unsatisfying are all worldly pleasures and pursuits. Whoever depends upon them for real happiness will be bitterly disappointed. Enjoy God rather than His creatures. **II. THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD NOT EXPECT PERFECT SATISFACTION IN THIS LIFE.** Not that the Christian religion does not do all that it promises to do in this world. The work of this life is only preparatory, and therefore incomplete. Imperfection is the just characterisation of this world. The Christian constantly finds himself enveloped in mystery and darkness. And his surroundings are unfavourable. Sin is in this world. Here he is contented, though not fully satisfied. **III. IN THE CHRISTIAN'S COMPLETED LIFE HEAVEN WILL AFFORD PERFECT SATISFACTION.**

1. The Christian will be satisfied with heaven as a place. 2. The Christian will be satisfied with the society of heaven. 3. We shall be satisfied with our own condition. We shall carry our intellect and our memories with us. Think of the joy that shall fill our souls when we arrive at the eternal home, enter our Father's house, and behold His face in righteousness, and by the power of His infinite tenderness and love be drawn into such nearness with Him as to repose on His bosom with infinite satisfaction and delight. (*G. M. Mathews.*)

*Satisfaction*:—The Lord's people are not strangers to satisfaction now. They are satisfied early with His favour, with His goodness, with the fatness of His house. They have found the supreme good. But they desire more of it. Hence David speaks of his satisfaction as future. "I shall be satisfied when," &c. So, then, see here—

**I. THE INSATIABLE AMBITION RELIGION INSPIRES.** We have witnessed this grandeur and elevation of soul even in the humblest walks of pious life. How poor the aims of the worldly hero compared with this. **II. THE EXCELLENCY OF THE SOUL.** It is the prerogative of many only to be capable of such sublime satisfaction. Other creatures have a food suited to their nature, partake of it and are satisfied. But man is not, cannot be, with aught he finds here. **III. WHAT A BLESSEDNESS THAT MUST BE THAT CAN AND WILL SATISFY EVERY LONGING OF THE SOUL.** Yes, though it be the soul of a Newton or Bacon. Then make this prospect sure; keep it clear; bring it near. Use it daily, in religion, in trials, when you come to die. The old and fictitious idea, that if a man travelled with a myrtle wand in his hand he would feel no fainting or weariness, is realised here in this blessed hope. (*William Jay.*)

*The saint's satisfaction*:—We may here observe—**I. THE GENUINE TEMPER OF A GRACIOUS SOUL AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE WORLD**—to be taken up with God as his chief good. And this is so with him. 1. From a settled conviction of emptiness and insufficiency of any created good to be to them instead of God. 2. There is everything in God that may commend and endear Him to His people. 3. 'Tis the property of grace to carry His people to Him as their chief good. 4. Gracious souls have all



found that rest, and some of them that joy in God, that nothing in the world besides can give, and which they would not exchange for anything it can offer. But—II. WHAT IT IS, WITH REFERENCE TO GOD, THAT SUMS UP HIS PEOPLE'S HAPPINESS. It is the beholding His face, and the satisfaction that results. More especially the likeness of God in Jesus Christ. Or the likeness may mean that which is impressed upon the soul, a resemblance of the Divine glory. Oh, happy they who, from seeing God's back parts, are thus gone to see Him face to face. III. WHOEVER IS ADMITTED TO BEHOLD GOD'S FACE, IT MUST BE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. Righteousness imputed. Jesus said, "I am the way." 2. Righteousness inherent. And this is necessary from the nature of the thing (2 Cor. vi. 14). What would sinners do in the presence of God? IV. HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY ENJOY OF HEAVEN HERE, THERE IS MUCH MORE RESERVED ABOVE WHICH THEY SHALL AT LAST OBTAIN. 1. God's people do have much of happiness or heaven, begun through God graciously showing Himself unto them. 2. But much more of heaven is yet reserved. And this is in order to wean them from the present world, and that they may have the quicker relish of their final blessedness. And, 3. This is what they are aspiring to, and shall at length obtain. V. THERE IS A FIXED AND PROPER SEASON FOR THE SAINTS' SATISFACTION. 1. The soul awakes when it is set free from the body. It does not descend into the grave with the body, but ascends to behold God's face. How calmly, then, should we contemplate death. 2. Both soul and body awake at the resurrection. The body is sown in corruption, but it shall be raised in incorruption. (*D. Wilcox.*) *The believer's present standing and assured anticipation:*—What a contrast do these words form with what goes before. The men of the world and Himself; their satisfaction and His. This Psalm not to be applied exclusively to Christ. Much tells of Him, but much also of ourselves to-day. Note—I. THE HIGH ATTAINMENT OF THE REAL CHILD OF GOD. He gets it now; now he beholds God's face in righteousness. Christ's righteousness, not his own, even the best of it. And we behold God's face thus when we appropriate for ourselves what Christ has done. If we have done this we shall live holily, because under the influence of Christ. II. THE INTERESTING EXPECTATION. "I shall be satisfied." How much of that likeness have I now? Ask yourselves that. The awaking, it includes both transformation and translation. Holiness and eternal life at the Resurrection. III. THE SOLEMN ASSURANCE. "I will behold"—very bold: "I shall be satisfied." "I hope and trust"—seems kicked out of doors. "I will," and "I shall." Now, intimacy with God, personal intimacy with God, is the only thing that can warrant such an assurance. Whatever you may know of doctrine, and whatever your walk may be with regard to morality (the more of it the better), I tell you, in the name of the living God, that you cannot—must not—dare not—claim this "will" and "shall" unless you know something about intimacy with God. Believe me, beloved, in that which I have often stated to you—this is the vitality of religion. (*Joseph Irons.*) *The satisfaction of the righteous man:*—Every man is conscious of desires that find here no befitting object. Nothing here comes up to the full aspirations of the soul. It is, and has been, the design of providence to teach men by example that a finite world is incompetent to fill out the demands of an immortal mind. I can never expect to be satisfied on this earth. Here the stupor of sleep is upon me. But not always shall I sleep. I shall awake. I shall behold the face of God in righteousness. In the future there are two periods when the righteous will have two reasons for exulting in their Maker. The Christian looks forward with the brightest hope to one or other of these two periods. So soon as his soul is released from the body it will rise as on the wings of an eagle to new knowledge and new bliss. Then is the eye of the intellect opened. Then the mental ear is made sensitive to every word of God as no uncertain sound. At death we pass into intimate contact with Him who keepeth all created minds vigilant in their measure like Himself. When the Christian repeats the words of the text he often alludes to the breaking up of his spiritual slumber, and says that the present world is a dream, and the bright world to which he goes is one of wakeful joy. But he often alludes to a richer scene than this. In some aspects he looks to the end of life as the end of trouble, and looks at death as a state of rest, of sleep in Jesus. A devout heart is a prophecy of ultimate enjoyment. We are sure of a holy peace if we have a holy appetite for it. 1. The righteous man will be satisfied with the Divine intellect. It is in compliance with the imperfect language of men that we speak of their Maker's intellect. This is His power to perceive all truth—all facts and all possibilities. Heaven is the abode of minds bearing His intellectual image.

2. The righteous man will be satisfied with the Divine sensibilities. He will be satisfied with God as the Spirit all whose involuntary emotions are exactly appropriate to their objects. 3. The righteous man will be satisfied with the holiness of God. He glorifies his intellect and sensibility with perfect benevolence. Moral rectitude is benevolence. Moral rectitude is moral beauty. The Christian also hopes to be satisfied in having a form like that which he adores: in possessing, so far as a creature is able to possess, the likeness of the Creator. It is said, "I shall be satisfied." He is to awake suddenly. As the commencement of this joy is sudden, so the date of it is uncertain. And if we are to be in this image, then we must cheerfully submit to all the influences needed for our transformation. (*E. A. Park, D.D.*) *The threefold hope of the Christian*:—I. FOR THE RIGHTEOUS THERE IS A GLORIOUS HOPE. This creed concerning the future has three clauses: "I shall awake; I shall be like Christ, when I awake; when I awake like Christ, I shall be satisfied." Simple and deep, as the very purposes of God! 1. "I shall awake." Tired eyes fall asleep, tired feet rest; but after God's beautiful ordinance of sleep is fulfilled we shall awake rested, refreshed, re-invigorated. What was it that David believed would wake up? What was it that David believed went to sleep? There is more than a little obscurity on this point. More than one modern writer speaks as if the soul were asleep. That we cannot think. We must apply sleeping and waking to that part of us to which it belongs. We put the body to sleep; we lay it in its narrow grave. We do not know what the Divine alchemy may do for these bodies of ours. 2. I shall be like Christ when I awake. Our bodies will be like Christ's body. The bodies of the saints will be glorified bodies, like the body of the Son of Man. And I feel glad that He lived a little while after the resurrection. 3. I shall be satisfied. (1) We shall be satisfied with ourselves. (2) We shall be satisfied with our homes. (3) We shall be satisfied with Christ. II. THE GLORIOUS HOPE BELONGS ONLY TO THE RIGHTEOUS. The first clause indicates those who will certainly enjoy this blessed hope. Those who can say, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness." You cannot see His face at all, if you do not see it that way. Righteousness as a state we call holiness. He who by faith in Jesus has righteousness as a standing will, also by faith, receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, which shall save him from sin and all uncleanness. We shall never be able to say, with any firmness of tone, "I shall be satisfied," until we can also add, "Not in my own righteousness, but in the righteousness which is of God in Christ." But that will lead to the other inevitably. (*John Bradford.*) *The man of the Bible*:—We have in Scripture a revelation of God, but we have also a revelation of man. This revelation of man, this that we call the human element mingling with the Divine in the Bible, is what makes it come home to our feelings, our conscience, our bosom, in a way that a simple revelation of the Divine thought by itself could never have done. We have much to be thankful for that God has given us the revelation of Himself through men. In this Book of Psalms it is men that speak to us under the influence of the Spirit. Look at this Psalm as representing to us the man of the Bible. 1. This man has a consciousness of a religious, Divine life in Him. It is a humble, thankful, moral, spiritual consciousness that this man, believing in God, loves Him, has communion with Him, and, under the influence of that Divine faith, keeps himself from the path of the destroyer, from the works and the society of the wicked. 2. This Divine faith, this religious consciousness in the man, develops and expands until it culminates in the persuasion of a future life, and an expectation of being with God and beholding Him. Men say there is nothing in the books of the law about a future life. But the Hebrews had a religion before they had the law. There was the patriarchal faith, the faith of Abraham and Jacob, and there was hope of the future in it. 3. This man anticipates a waking up,—that there will be something like an abruptness, something like suddenness in the crisis; that all at once he will come face to face with God, into a fulness of the revelation of the Divine countenance, and a conformity to His image. His words may have been uttered by David without his understanding distinctly what was in them, but feeling that there was some great idea suggested to him by that condition of his Divine life under which the Spirit was then influencing him. The idea of a future life among the Hebrew people gradually expanded until it took the form of a resurrection. Our Lord did not bring life and immortality to light as a new thing; He took it as a thing existing in the Hebrew mind, existing imperfectly and indistinctly, and He threw light upon it, brought it out in all fulness and completeness and perfection. 4. This man will be perfectly satisfied. If God has created a species of beings with spiritual and religious faculty; then the

infusion into the spirit a participation in the Divine blessedness must be satisfaction ; all the faculties regaled, every want met. 5. The man expects all this through righteousness—"in righteousness"—that is, as the outcome and end of a righteous life, heroic in its contest with evil, grand in its development of obedience and duty. That is the doctrine of the Bible from beginning to end. That is, then, the idea of the man of the Bible ; believing in God, he lives near Him and with Him, and has a consciousness of a spiritual and religious life, that expands into the anticipation of a future life ; that takes the particular form of rising from the lowest at one step to the highest face to face with God, with something of suddenness. And with that he expects an ultimate and perfect satisfaction, and he expects it in the way of righteousness. Now, what do you think of that man ? We are quite capable of forming a moral judgment. Take this man, then, weigh him, measure him, judge him, what sort of man is he ? 1. The foundation thought of this man must be approved and justified. If there be a God, can anything be more right or justifiable than that an individual with the capacity of religion, the power of faith, should pray to, worship, and trust God, believe in his Fatherhood, and seek to have spiritual, religious communion with Him ? 2. Then take the next idea—that this religious faith expands into the anticipation of a future life. There are grounds and reasons on which common sense would say, "The man is right, the man is reasonable." He belongs to a system in which what we call nature wastes nothing. Nature is the most thrifty thing you can imagine. There is not a single atom of matter annihilated. It changes its form, it takes another position, but it is there. Are all minds to be wasted ? Is she to be extravagant just here ? Nature never deceives. All the instincts, all the faculties, which are in any of its creatures, there is always something to meet them. Is nature to play loose with the moral aspirations of man, the spiritual instincts, the irrepressible anticipations of which he is capable ? 3. Take the other idea. He anticipates a kind of abrupt, sudden rise. You will say, How can that be justified ? Would not gradual successive steps be more reasonable ? But the religion of the Bible gives us the idea of a terrible catastrophe that happened to humanity. Humanity is in an unnatural condition, and therefore there comes down the supernatural. There is the supernatural revelation of a Mediator and redemption, therefore the process is altogether changed. It seems to be more consistent under the new circumstances that a man should awake and suddenly find himself at home with God. And there will be a likeness, an awaking in His image. This man anticipates it, and he will be satisfied with it. (*Thomas Binney.*)

*Satisfied.*—The Psalmist has a morning in his view unspeakably desirable and glorious. How are we to understand his words of mystic devotion, and ecstasy, and hope ? Not, surely, of the following morning in the Psalmist's life. The singer does not merely look forward to a deliverance from his present sorrows and sufferings. That is John Calvin's interpretation. It is, however, difficult to find a worthy meaning, unless we think of the sleep of death and the radiant morning of eternity which is to follow. It may seem strange to listen to so definite a statement of the everlasting future at so early a stage in the revelation. But a devout man who is in communion with God, and who knows the delights of that matchless friendship, will reach up now and then to the conclusion that the communion and friendship are destined to survive the present world. Let us single out some of the elements of this blessedness, this satisfaction. I. THERE IS THE BEATITUDE OF THE SENSES. We may believe that there is aggrandisement, expansion, growth in store for our senses. Have we not hints of it already ? In the Christian life on earth these bodily faculties are sometimes marvellously quickened and sharpened. II. THERE IS THE BEATITUDE OF THE MIND. We think ; we study ; we seek after truth, and find it. It is one of the highest glories of our manhood that it is so governed by the passion for knowledge, and so resolved to grow in wisdom. Our minds, once we have learned to sit at the feet of Jesus, are admitted to new marvels and delights. We are scholars in the most blessed school. We grow not only in knowledge, but in holiness and trust and love. But much continues to be veiled and covered even from the sanctified intellect. In the hereafter we shall understand. What an awakening it will be for our intellect ! III. THERE IS THE BEATITUDE OF THE MEMORY. Such a weird and tremendous power is our memory. It retains our past, storing up our experience, letting nothing slip out of its tenacious grasp. And it reproduces our past, summoning it all back again when it chooses, to scourge as it did Manasseh, to solace and strengthen us as it did St. Paul. Memory can never be the bringer only of good tidings to God's people in this life. Memory is too precious a chamber of the soul to be scattered and



destroyed. What will make its words only good and comfortable in heaven is, that it will live there in the perpetual presence of Christ. IV. THERE IS THE BEATITUDE OF THE CONSCIENCE. We carry about with us a faculty which is at once a mirror of right and wrong, and a law enacting royally the path in which we ought to go, and a tribunal condemning us sternly and terribly for our wandering from the straight road, and a voice of God Himself within our breast. A priceless and momentous possession indeed, but an exceedingly troublesome one to many of us. V. THERE IS THE BEATITUDE OF THE HEART. It is the heart which loves. But what heart has gained its end and arrived at its goal? There is no satisfied heart. In the city of God all hearts are satisfied. Heaven is the heart's harbour made after the weary and stormy sea. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*) *The Christian's future likeness to Christ*:—David and Paul and John looked for the same blessed consummation of their happiness for eternity, in being like their Lord. I. THE ASSURED HOPE OF SATISFACTION AT A FUTURE TIME. The cause of his satisfaction is the likeness of God. We to whom the New Testament is given know what that likeness is, for to that end is the history of Jesus Christ given us. David could only have had a vague and indistinct idea; but still it had a practical hold on his mind, and influenced his character. David's was a personal God, a living person, to whom like a child to its parent he could run and take refuge. And therefore, as his hope here was clear and well defined, so was his hope hereafter. They always go together in this. II. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF HIS SATISFACTION. Satisfied expresses more than joy. It is the fulness of joy. The idea is purposely contrasted with the state of things around him, in which, at the best of times, there was always something wanting. He will be satisfied. There will be nothing left to wish and long for, and it will be all comprised and contained in that one absorbing brilliance of his hope, the likeness of his Lord. Break this up into some of its particulars. 1. There are the real pleasures of life, such as do contribute to man's happiness, and to the well-being of the world. And life has such pleasures, and many of them. But there are cares. There is no satisfying portion in our pleasures. There is, and ever will be, much that is hollow. Not so when we wake up after the Saviour's likeness. We shall have attained to the Saviour's likeness, and that admits of nothing higher that we can attain. 2. Look for a moment at the body. The body is a wonderful instrument. The body is not a thing to be cried down and despised, as we shall know full well when we have it in the Saviour's likeness. 3. It is the same with the mind or intelligence. The mind presents the same absence of a satisfying fulness, that its lower companion, the body, does. 4. Paul hints that it is thus with what even now is really good. 5. Look at that which is beyond yourself. It is the same with the society you must mingle with. III. THE TIME SPECIFIED. "When I awake." On the morning of the resurrection. David, under all the cares of government, in all the discomforts and troubles of his family and his position, turned for consolation to that bright hope which gilds the horizon of the waiting Christian. (*G. Deans, M.A.*) *When I awake*.—*The dream and its awakening*:—How does our life show itself, to the devout and reflective mind, as little better than a vision of the night! Think what dreams are in themselves, taking them generally, and then think what any devout man's life, or any man's life, appears when he comes to look back upon it from old age, and you will have no great difficulty in answering this question. There is an absence of method in dreams. They are incongruous, incoherent, disconnected, confused. Our dreams come like shadows, and so depart. In all this the devout mind finds resemblance to its own history. Many thoughts and feelings of a better kind have been stirring within us. But there is no order, no properly connecting link. Perhaps we should find it difficult to put anything like order into our present spiritual state and feeling, to say nothing about the past. There is a lack of any right measurement of time in dreams. In a single moment of sleep we may seem to live through weeks, and even months and years. There is no real time in sleep. All is illusive. We are equally at fault in our attempts to estimate our life. Bliss lessens it, sorrow lengthens it out. The past takes its tinge from our present condition. Surprises are rare in dreams. We may meet our own funeral procession, but we feel no surprise. Here the likeness holds good of other things. There is enough of the wonderful in our lives, and in the lives of those around us, if only we could see it, if only we were awake. There is in dreams an indistinctness and liability to fade. We see, and yet we do not see. There is a blurred image of something. We are like men attempting to catch a shadow. An old feeling is one of the most difficult things to recall, because

it was dependent upon much that was temporary; and some thoughts are like feelings. But this fleetingness and indistinctness in our life is brought more vividly before us as all other impressions fade. The memory decays, or seems to decay. We find it hard to recall names. Perhaps also our perception appears to decline, through the failing of the body. Life is slipping away; and life seems then little better than a dream. Now look at the other side. If life is as a dream, death is the awakening from it. Some refer the Psalm to awakening from simple sleep. We regard them as distinctly referring to the resurrection. There is a certainty about this awakening. The evidence of the resurrection is strong and manifold. See that supplied by Christian literature; by religious observances; by Christian character and life. As death is certain, so is the awakening after death. If our life be as a dream, our death will be as the light of morning awakening us from a sleep. Consider the attractions of this awakening. There is the Divine resemblance which will be enjoyed by us in it. Death does not possess any regenerative power; but there is nevertheless the promise of completeness to the believer in the world beyond the grave. There is full contentment in that other world. We never get this out of anything here. However we plan and forearrange, we are always stumbling upon something which brings disappointment. But there, no bitter disappointment ever comes. In that fair clime there is no tempter, no doubt, no sin. Should not the thought of this better life also check undue expectations as to the present? (*J. Jackson Goadby.*) *The future of the believer:—*

I. THE STATE TO WHICH BY IMPLICATION DAVID INTIMATES THAT HE SHOULD BE REDUCED. "When I awake." From what? Sleep; but not nightly sleep, rather the sleep of death. In assimilating death to sleep David gives utterance to no fiction. In many respects they differ; yet sleep is an impressive picture of death. David does not mean to assert, that when the body sleeps in death the soul sleeps also. The soul is not inactive in ordinary bodily sleep. The death of the body is no more the death than it is the sleep of the soul, but simply a giving up the ghost,—a passing of the soul from a relationship that is seen to a relationship that is unseen. The analogy of death and sleep holds equally in the case of good and of bad men. II. THE CHANGE WHICH DAVID AFFIRMS THAT HE SHOULD UNDERGO. He says that from the sleep of death he should awake. When, he did not know, but of the certainty of his awaking, of the nature of his appearance, and of the recognisableness of his personality when awakened he does speak. In the creed of David the awakening of his body from the sleep of death—its living reunion with his soul, was a fact—not a matter of doubt, but a matter of certainty. To this doctrine many cannot subscribe. But because it is beyond the reach of the power that is finite, does this prove that it is beyond the reach of that power that is infinite? Consider the nature of his appearance when awakened. "With Thy likeness." The likeness of Christ's resurrection body. III. THE FELICITY OF WHICH DAVID DECLARES THAT HE SHOULD PARTICIPATE. "I shall be satisfied." It was not with David a problematical thing, but a thing of which he was sure. The felicity of the glorified consists in their seeing and resembling Him in whose likeness they shall awake. (*A. Jack, D.D.*)

*The Christian's awakening:—*In the words of the text is an implied contrast between the present and the future condition of God's people, in three particulars. 1. The present state is figuratively exhibited as one of sleep. He that wakes must have been asleep. David regarded this life as little better than an unquiet sleep. At times we are ready to doubt whether anything about us is real, and to suspect that we are the dupes all along of deceitful impressions. Moreover, the Christian wayfarer is painfully conscious of deficiency in that lively wakefulness which is most important to his spiritual progress. How, then, can he fail to desire earnestly the time of awaking? 2. The unsatisfactory nature of all things here below was another fact that pressed on David's mind. In saying "I shall be satisfied," he as good as says "I am not satisfied." What meagre fare to a spiritual man must that be which even a natural man finds deficient. 3. Here, again, the Psalmist encounters one of those great evils, perfect deliverance from which is reserved to another state of being. That evil is the loss of God's image. That loss is only partially repaired in any renewed soul. It is the heartfelt complaint of every pious person, that his resemblance to God is so faint and obscure. What is the aim, or substance, of religion? It is to know, to love, to imitate God, as He is revealed to us in the face of Immanuel. We are religiously happy, just in proportion as the moral character of God is transfused into our souls. This, then, is the fulness of joy to an immortal and sanctified being—we shall "be like Him." (*J. N. Pearson, M.A.*) *The great awakening:—*A good man's consolation in a time of severe distress. He contrasts

his enemies' condition and his own. They had their portion in this life. He looked for his in the life to come. I. THE AWAKENING. According to the ideas commonly entertained with regard to our state now and hereafter, we are awake in this life, and we sleep at death. The text suggests another thought, namely, that in this life we are asleep, and at death we wake out of sleep. Before conversion men may certainly be said to be asleep. Sin acts as a sedative. But that is not the thought here. The Psalmist was a godly man, and yet, comparing his present condition with the future, he regarded himself as asleep. We, too, have felt at times that the best known and most active of our powers are comparatively dormant. And it is reasonable to suppose that there are other faculties and powers within us at present slumbering, of whose existence we have no consciousness, and for which we have no name. II. THE SIGHT WHICH HE WOULD WITNESS. "I shall behold Thy face in righteousness." The face of a familiar friend is welcome. The very sight of him sometimes does good. God's face is invisible at present. "Now we see through a glass darkly." How dim is the outline of His character! Many call God their Father who would be ashamed to exhibit the qualities which they attribute to Him. Sometimes God's face does seem averted or disguised. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." The sight of God's face will not afford delight to every one. In some it will awaken terror; in others shame. III. THE SATISFACTION WHICH THE SIGHT WILL AFFORD. "I shall be satisfied." The worldling is not satisfied, and cannot be. The Christian cannot find satisfaction in anything that the world offers. (*F. J. Austin.*) *The dream, the awakening, and the transformation:—* I. MAN'S LIFE IS A DREAM. In what respect is it like a dream? 1. It is unreal. A dream is a mere phantom of the brain, an airy fiction; what the mind sees and hears is mere semblance, not substance. So is life. Every man walketh in a vain show. We live amongst shadows, not substances. 2. It is disorderly. Dreams seem to have no method, no law of succession; they are a jumble of incoherences and incongruities. How disorderly is our life, our plans and theories are conflicting and shifting. 3. It is fleeting. We can dream a poem, a history in a minute or two; dreams take no note of time. So with life: how fleet and fluctuating. It is forgettable. How soon is a dream forgotten! The grandest vision of the night often dissolves into forgetfulness at the break of day. What a tendency in this life there is to forget our best impressions and holiest resolves. Truly, life is a dream. We are often but the creatures of imagination, uncontrolled either by judgment or conscience. II. MAN'S DEATH IS AN AWAKENING. In that dread moment when the soul quits the body it wakes up to the realities of existence. The markets, governments, trades, professions, pleasures, and pursuits of the world fade as a baseless vision of the night the moment the soul opens its eye in eternity. The man is brought, not only into a life of realities, but into conscious contact with these realities—Law, Spirit, God. Death, instead of being the extinction of being, is the awakening of it out of sleep. III. MAN'S SATISFACTION IS GOD'S LIKENESS. "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." In what respect? Not in the respect of might, or wisdom, or ubiquity. But in the sense of moral character, and the essence of that character is love. "God is love." Man's satisfaction is where? In love. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the image of God, are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of Christ." (*Homilist.*) *The destiny of the good:—* I. THE DEATH OF THE GOOD IS AN AWAKING FROM SLEEP. The best of men are scarcely awake here. The apostle felt this when he said, "It is high time to awake out of sleep." He was speaking to Christians. 1. There is much spiritual torpor even in the best. Where is that earnest activity which we feel is the right thing for us?—the activity which Christ had when He said, "I must work," &c. What Paul had, who said, "I count not my life dear," &c. "I press towards the mark," &c. 2. There is much spiritual dreaming in the best. Our views of Divine things are often only as the incoherent visions of a dream. At death the soul wakes up. It is a morning to it,—a bright, joyous, stirring morning. Do not be afraid of death, then. II. IN THIS AWAKING AT DEATH THERE WILL BE THE COMPLETE ASSIMILATION OF THE SOUL TO GOD. "When I awake, with Thy likeness." What is this likeness? Not a resemblance to His wisdom, power, or sovereignty, but a resemblance to His governing disposition:—LOVE. Moral likeness to a being consists in a likeness to His ruling disposition. Variety in material objects and mental characteristics is the glory of the creation. But similarity in moral disposition is what heaven demands as the essence of virtue and the condition of bliss. All can love, and to love is to be like God. At death this



in the good becomes perfect. Our sympathies will then flow entirely with His, our wills will then go entirely within the circle of His. III. IN THIS ASSIMILATION WILL CONSIST THE EVERLASTING SATISFACTION OF OUR NATURE. "I shall be satisfied." There is no satisfaction without this. 1. The spiritual powers will not work harmoniously under the dominion of any other disposition. 2. The conscience will frown upon any other state of mind. 3. The Great One will not bless with His friendship any other state of mind in His creatures. (*Homilist.*) *The awakening of man*.—David therefore expected to live after death,—he should awake, and awake in God's likeness. I. AT DEATH THE SOUL OF THE BELIEVER THUS AWAKES. The remains of sin are done away, and nothing left but the image of God. II. OUR PRESENT STATE IS A KIND OF NIGHT SCENE. As dreams, and like the vagaries of sleep. Only that is solid and valuable which has been connected with God. How short are waking intervals. Natural men are entirely asleep, but Christians cannot sleep, "as do others." Yet they are often drowsy and insensible. Hence Paul says, "It is high time to wake out of sleep." And at death they will wake out of sleep. III. THE BODY LIKEWISE SHALL AWAKE. For the body is an essential part of human nature. But it is lying under the incapacities and dishonours of mortality. Therefore the intermediate state is necessarily an imperfect one. But the purchase of the Saviour will be reclaimed. "We wait for the Saviour, who shall change our vile body that," &c. (*William Jay.*) *The final awakening of the saint*.—Among the beautiful epitaphs, of which the world is full, the following may be mentioned: Near Marshfield, the famous country home of Daniel Webster, is a lonely little graveyard where the great statesman lies buried. Beside him is the grave of his wife, and traced on the tombstone is this exquisite inscription, "Let me go, the day is breaking." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The time for satisfaction*.—Who has not misread this verse, by not perceiving the punctuation? How often has the comma after "awake" been struck out, and thus the whole sense of the passage lost! It has been read, "When I awake with Thy likeness"; being so read it has been violated. Observe the punctuation, and further comment is needless. We might turn it round thus, "I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake." The man does not awake with the likeness; he is satisfied with the likeness when he awakes. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The two awakenings* (with *Psa. lxxiii. 20*):—Both these Psalms are occupied with that standing puzzle to Old Testament worthies—the good fortune of bad men, and the bad fortune of good ones. The former tells of the calamities of David; the latter, of the perplexity of Asaph "when he saw the prosperity of the wicked." And as the problem is the same, so is the solution. David and Asaph both point on to a period when such perplexities shall not be. David thinks of it in regard to himself; Asaph, in regard to the wicked. And both describe that future period as an awakening: David as his own; Asaph, as that of God. What they meant is not absolutely clear. Some would bring the words well within the limits of the present life; others see in them what tells of the future life that stretches beyond the grave. But inasmuch as David contrasts his awaking with the death of "the men of this world," it would seem that he points on, however dimly, to that which is "within the veil." And as for Asaph, the awaking he tells of may refer to some act of judgment in this life. But the strong words in which the context describes this awaking as the "destruction" and "the end" of the godless tell rather of life's final close. The doctrine of the future life was never clear to Israel as to us. Hence there are great tracts of the Old Testament where it never appears at all. This very difficulty about "the prosperity of the wicked" would not have arisen had they known what we do. But in these Psalms we see men being taught of God the clearer hope which alone could sustain them. Regarding, then, the end of life as told of in both these Psalms, we note—I. THAT TO ALL MEN THE END OF LIFE IS AN AWAKENING. We call death, sleep, but we use the word as a euphemism to veil the form and deformity of the ugly thing, death. But this name we give to death tells of our weariness of life, and how blessed we think it will be to be still at last with folded hands and shut eyes. But the emblem is but half the truth. For, "what dreams may come!" And we shall wake too. The spirit shall spring into greater intensity of action. To our true selves and to God we shall awake. Here we are like men asleep in some chamber that looks towards the eastern sky. Morning by morning comes sunrise, with the tender glory of its rosy light and blushing heavens, and the heavy eyes are closed to it all. Here and there some light sleeper, with thinner eyelids or face turned to the sun, is half-conscious of a vague brightness, and feels the light, though he sees not the colour of the sky nor

the forms of the filmy clouds. Such souls are our saints and prophets, but most of us sleep on unconscious. But to us all the moment of awaking will come. What shall it be to us? II. DEATH IS TO SOME MEN THE AWAKING OF GOD. "When Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." The metaphor is a common one. God awakes when He arises to judge a nation. But the word here points on to the future. The present life is the time of God's forbearance, the field for the manifestation of patient love, not willing that any should perish. Here and now His judgment, for the most part, slumbers. But He will awake. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," and the wicked will have to confront "the terror of the Lord." For sixty times sixty slow, throbbing seconds, the silent hand creeps unnoticed round the dial, and then, with whirr and clang, the bell rings out, and another hour of the world's secular day is gone. All present judgments—epochs of convulsion and ruin—are but precursors of the day when God awakes. III. DEATH IS THE ANNIHILATION OF THE VAIN SHOW OF WORLDLY LIFE. Things here are non-substantial—shadows—and non-permanent. IV. DEATH IS TO SOME MEN SUCH ANNIHILATION IN ORDER TO REVEAL THE GREAT REALITY. "Thy likeness." "Form," the word really means. Hence the "likeness" means, not conformity to the Divine character, but the beholding of His self-manifestation. Seeing God we shall be satisfied. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) With Thy likeness.—*Happiness of saints in heaven*:—I. THERE IS SUCH A PLACE AS HEAVEN. Some imagine that heaven is a state rather than a place; but it is not easy to conceive of this distinction. The idea of locality attends all our ideas of created objects, whether spiritual or corporeal. The idea of place accompanies our idea of angels. Whatever changes pass upon glorified bodies, they must still be material, and have a local existence. II. GOD MANIFESTS HIS PECULIAR PRESENCE IN HEAVEN. David expected to behold the face of God in some peculiar manner when he should awake in the world of light. In some unusual manner God manifests His presence in heaven. III. WHEN THE SAINTS ARRIVE IN HEAVEN THEY WILL BE COMPLETELY SATISFIED AND HAPPY THERE. They will enjoy all that felicity which David anticipated. If there be perfect happiness anywhere in the universe it is to be expected in heaven, where God is, and Christ is, and where all the holy beings are collected, and united in their views and affections. Consider the various species of happiness in heaven—1. They will enjoy all the happiness which can flow from the free and full exercise of all their intellectual powers and faculties. 2. They will enjoy the pleasures of the heart, as well as those of the understanding. These are the most refined pleasures of the soul. 3. They shall enjoy the pleasures of the heart in the richest variety. 4. They will enjoy the pleasures of society, as well as of devotion. 5. They will have ineffable pleasure from the expressions of the peculiar love and approbation of God. 6. That which will carry celestial blessedness to the highest degree of perfection is the pleasure of anticipation—the prospect of appearing before God, and beholding His face in righteousness. All the redeemed will joyfully anticipate their perpetual felicity, and rising glory to all eternity. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *The likeness perfected*:—Dr. Lyman Abbott says, "The artist stands at his easel painting the portrait of one before him; and I go and look at it, and scowl and shrug my shoulders, and say, 'It is not like him; I can see the ghost of an appearance looking out through the lustreless eyes and the untrue features, but it is not my friend.' And the artist says, 'Wait! when I have finished the picture, and put the purpose—the soul—into it, then judge, not before.' So Christ sits for His portrait, and God takes me as a canvas, and paints, and ever and anon I grow foolish enough to look at myself, and shake my head in despair, and say, 'That will never be a portrait.' Then I come back to His promise: 'You shall be satisfied when you awake in His likeness,' and I am satisfied beforehand in this hope that He gives me." *Human capacity for God*:—I was very much impressed some time ago by hearing one of our missionaries from Ceylon tell of the death of a poor Cingalese woman, a convert to Christ, who exclaimed with her last breath, "Oh, how beautiful God is!" You will remember that those were among the last words of a very different person, the sweet-souled, highly cultured Charles Kingsley, and you will see, I doubt not, in the coincidence of thought at the supreme moment of life between that poor Cingalese woman, who had long looked for God by the dim light of her pagan faith, and that cultured Englishman, who had walked in the broad noonday of truth with all the windows of his being open to the sun, a parable of how God, the great Father of spirits, can bring from very different points, and by very diverse paths, the alien, hungering heart of man to the enjoyment of Himself. In Charles Kingsley and in his Cingalese sister there was the capacity for the

same thing, the enjoyment of God; and I believe, and you believe, that wherever a human heart beats under God's great sky that capacity exists. Christianity does not necessarily create it; Christ finds it, and fathoms it and fills it. (*R. Wright Hay.*) *The likeness of God*.—I. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS LIKENESS TO GOD? It is a spiritual likeness, an enstamping the Divine image upon the soul, a moulding the soul into the Divine similitude. The likeness of which the Psalmist speaks is a conformity of soul to God. In order to this we must undergo a great change. That likeness to God of which the righteous shall partake will consist in a similarity between the qualities of their souls and the attributes of the Divine nature. But some of the Divine attributes are incommunicable. The likeness will consist—1. In knowledge. Our knowledge must ever be derived and dependent. The righteous may resemble God in the certainty of their knowledge, and in its clearness and distinctness. The knowledge of glorified saints, compared with what they now possess, may very properly be said to resemble the Divine knowledge in extent. Doubtless the powers of the soul will greatly expand. 2. The future likeness of the saints to God will consist in holiness. The moral image of God is defaced and destroyed in apostate man. But in Christ Jesus the glory of our nature is restored. The restoration is only partial in this present life. But the whole body of believers shall, ere long, be made perfect in holiness. In the immediate presence of the blessed God, faith and hope shall attain perfection. 3. The righteous shall be like God in blessedness. This necessarily results from the two last. And the blessedness will be, like God's, eternal. II. THE FEELINGS OF THE BLESSED, WHEN THEY ENTER UPON THIS PORTION. They will feel that all their most enlarged desires have been fulfilled. It will satisfy the pious soul by filling up its capacities and wishes. Let afflicted Christians learn patience and find consolation. (*W. J. Armstrong, D.D.*) *The revelation of God in man*.—Man is capable of discovering, and has actually discovered, some true knowledge of God. The best answer we can make to the unbeliever in an objective revelation will be to say—1. The religion which you accept on an external authority had for its origin nothing else in the world than the human consciousness which you now despise. Place all the religions of the world in their chronological order, and you will find that each one is the revolt of independent thought against the authority of the religion which preceded it. 2. At all events, we cannot any longer abide by your revelation, for we have discovered error in it. To our minds it represents God in an unworthy and even in a degraded aspect. 3. We will tell you how our conceptions of God are determined in the first instance, how they are sustained, and how they can be corrected and improved. We look at man, we examine ourselves. In relation to puzzling problems and analogies in the outer world we feel the necessity for faith and patience towards God, such as our children have to exercise towards the most loving parents. The reverence for goodness as goodness is universal in man, differing only in degree in proportion as different men have higher or lower conceptions of what goodness is. The verdict of humanity has long been passed, that morality, justice, love, righteousness, goodness, call it what you will, is the best and highest in man, and the most righteous man, or most loving man, is the noblest. From this we rise by one step into a conception of God's moral attributes. God must be, at least, as good as the noblest of men. We cannot accept as a God one whose moral principles are below those of his own finite creatures. Mankind itself is the ever-expanding bible in which the Divine revelation is being written. Every religion in the days of its youth was the immediate result of some previous progress in human morality. If you want proof that the real origin of religious belief is the reverence of human goodness, take not the mere creed of Christendom, but the cherished belief of its heart. Why do Christians worship Christ as God? Certainly not because it was said that He was God, but because they believed Him to be a perfect man. They first admired and loved Him for His goodness, and then they made Him Divine, and robed Him in all the splendours of heavenly royalty out of gratitude for His human love. To those, then, who are really Christians, and really religious, we come on their own ground, and say, If it is human goodness you really worship, we can show you plenty of that, equal to Christ's, and even better still. We can show you at least the same thing free from some of His personal errors. In almost every particular the conceptions which we have of God are more exalted and pure than any which have gone before it. They are attained, as all other conceptions are, namely, by the gradual advance in the moral and intellectual nature of man. Our faith is nobler than yours, because we have allowed ourselves to be taught by the moral progress of our own times, and by



the highest instincts of our souls. To our moral instincts and our attainment of the knowledge of goodness we must add our own deep and earnest aspirations, as witnesses of what God really is. No words so well express the possession of soul by the Divine presence and its loftiest aspirations as those of the text, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; and I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." (*Charles Voysey.*)

### PSALM XVIII.

**VERS. 1-3. I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength.**—*The tale of a life*:—In this magnificent hymn the royal poet sketches, in a few grand outlines, the tale of his life—the record of his marvellous deliverances, and of the victories which Jehovah had given him—the record, too, of his own heart, the truth of its affection towards God, and the integrity of purpose by which it had ever been influenced. Throughout that singularly chequered life, hunted as he had been by Saul before he came to the throne, and harassed perpetually after he became king by rivals, who disputed his authority and endeavoured to steal away the hearts of his people—compelled to fly for his life before his own son, and engaged afterwards in long and fierce wars with foreign nations—one thing had never forsaken him, the love and presence of Jehovah. By His help he had subdued every enemy, and now, in his old age, looking back with devout thankfulness on the past, he sings this great song of praise to the God of his life. With a heart full of love he will tell how Jehovah delivered him, and then there rises before the eyes of his mind the whole force and magnitude of the peril from which he had escaped. So much the more wonderful appears the deliverance which accordingly he represents in a bold poetical figure, as a stooping of the Most High from heaven to save him—who comes, as He came of old to Sinai, with all the terror and gloom of earthquake, and tempest, and thick darkness. But God delivers those only who trust in Him and who are like Him. There must be an inner life of communion with God, if man will know His mercy. Hence David passes on to that covenant relationship in which he had stood to God. He had ever been a true Israelite, and therefore God, the true God of Israel, had dealt with him accordingly. And thus it is at the last that the servant of Jehovah finds his reward. (*J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D.*) *Have we permission to love God?*—It will awaken surprise in you to hear this question, yet it cannot exceed mine on hearing it, as I once did, from a distinguished man whom I had long regarded as truly devout. Being together at the house of his relative, this man, of world-wide reputation as a man of genius, astonished me with this question, "What do you understand by love to God?" I looked at him with surprise; but before I could speak he added, "I know what fear of God means; but I do not understand what is meant when I am called upon to love God." Had I uttered the thought which arose in my mind I should have said, "I always supposed you to be a Christian; can it be possible that you have need that one should teach you the alphabet of religious experience?" But I put questions to him, encouraged by his frank nature, and I now discovered that his difficulty was this, that loving God implied a degree of familiarity which seemed to him unsuitable in a finite creature when approaching his Creator. He acknowledged that the language of the Bible encouraged the idea of familiarity in our intercourse with God; still, he preferred to explain all such permission by what he called Orientalism. In vain was it urged in reply that Orientalism rather forbade than encouraged liberty in approaching Majesty; prostration, even to abjectness, was enjoined on ministers of state, as well as menial servants. Hence there are two extremes against which we have need to be on our guard. One is familiarity; the other is stoicism. The apostles maintain a just medium between these extremes. The question which I have already mentioned as put to me by a man of distinguished genius was also expressed by a plain man, a mechanic. He was in the last stages of a decline, but in full possession of his faculties. Once as I was leaving his bedside he said, "One thing more I wish to ask: I lie here and talk with God in a way which startles me. I use expressions of endearment, address Him by affectionate names, make requests as a child to a parent, indulge in words of adoration; all of which, on second thought, seem to me too free for a mortal to use

in his intercourse with his Master. Yet my feelings are so strong that I cannot restrain myself." I said to him, "You ask, *May you love God thus?* The Saviour says, quoting the Old Testament, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.' Do you ever exceed this?" An expression of satisfaction came over his face. The next day he had gone to see Him "whom not having seen" he "loved." The words of the text leave no room to question that the predominant feeling of David was this, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength." Then he proceeds to heap up epithets of love to God. He draws them from his experience in wildernesses and caves. Had he been a seafaring man we doubtless should have had him saying, "Thou art my lighthouse, my pilot, my harbour; to Thee I am homeward bound; with Thee I am safe home." How enthusiastic in passionate expression of love to God is all true religious poetry. And when a man is converted, how his heart goes out in love to God. See this in Paul. And here is one instance from the preaching of the Gospel, and there are scores of such. A man was riding home on horseback after evening service, meditating on what he had heard. He was secretly persuaded to yield himself up to God, when all at once light from heaven broke upon his mind, revealing to him the way of salvation by Christ with a sense of peace with God and the joy of pardoned sin; so that he found himself in a new world. Unable to contain his joy at the discovery, having no one at home who could enter into his feelings, turning his horse's head, he rode back three miles to the minister's house, and called him to the door. Taking both of the minister's hands in his, he cried out, "Oh, sir! what a God we have!" which was the substance of all that he said, for it was impossible for words to express his emotions, and he mounted and rode home, singing and praying. No one would have found it more impossible than he to answer the question, "What do you understand by loving God?"—he whose whole being was at that hour flooded with it could have found no words to define his emotions. Does any one say, "Of what value can such emotions be to God?" We might answer him, Of what value is anything to God? He will one day give up this globe to fire. There is nothing of any value to God except love. The whole object of God in the Bible seems everywhere to have been to make men love Him.

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF MEN IN THE BIBLE SHOWS US THAT THE SUM OF HUMAN DUTY IS TO LOVE GOD. See the Book of Deuteronomy, to which our Lord so often referred. It is full of expostulations to urge Israel to love God. Joshua, too, does not bid them tremble, as he well might, in view of their stupendous history, but "love the Lord." Some will say this seems very strange. Let such consider that there is no way in which, on account of the hardness of our hearts, God brings us to love Him more effectually than by His terrible dispensations. When night comes down in the Azores the lavender beds yield perfumes which all day long the hot sun had consumed. After a storm we look for sea mosses and pebbles which the working of the sea has brought on shore. "The Lord hath said that He will dwell in the thick darkness"—so spoke Solomon, and it is true. If God desires to draw a Christian very near to Himself, He will almost always send a heavy trial upon him. David said, "When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." We see Christians who have been grievously afflicted, cleaving to God the more that He smites them. If God has set His love on a man He may honour him by great trials. He cannot trust all to bear great trials. He said of Saul of Tarsus, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My sake." Probably there is nothing which excites the admiration of angels more than to see us loving God the more that He afflicts us. Then they see the power of faith; how it makes a man endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

II. THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS THE DIVINE TESTIMONY TO MAN, NOT ONLY THAT HE MAY BUT THAT HE MUST LOVE GOD. See how John in his epistles insists on this, that God is Love. The governing principle in God is love. Other attributes belong to Him, but He is none of them. "God is Love." Therefore He must desire the love of His people. They are born of the Spirit. Shall man, His new creation, be a cold, phlegmatic, intellectual being? May we be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. (*N. Adams, D.D.*) *A text that looks two ways:*—I. BACKWARD, UPON THE MERCIES AND DELIVERANCES OF GOD. These are expressed in the titles used—strength, rock, fortress, &c. These are synonymous phrases, signifying one and the same thing. There is not here merely the exuberance of a poetical style. The apparent exaggeration in David's hymn flows from the

abundance of a devout and grateful heart labouring to empty and discharge its fullness. How well such a full acknowledgment would become us! II. FORWARD, IN THE RETURNS OF DUTY, to which he engageth himself. 1. Of love (ver. 1). 2. Of trust (ver. 1). 3. Of praise and prayer (ver. 3). We are to love God for His own excellencies, because He requires it, and in response to His love. Trust is an act of friendship, and the greatest fruit it yields, mutual confidence, springing naturally from mutual affection. (*J. Dolben, D.D.*) *A song of thanksgiving in review of a troublous life*:—This Psalm is a fervent outpouring of gratitude, not for any single deliverance, but for all the deliverances of his tried and stormy life. I. A LIFE GREATLY TROUBLED. Four facts concerning “ungodly men.” They were worthless, numerous, violent, and indefatigable. And our sufferings, as David’s, grow out of our physical constitution, our social relationships, our moral delinquencies and remorse. II. A GOD EQUAL TO ALL EMERGENCIES. God appears to David in his trials in a twofold aspect—passive and active: resting as a rock, and moving as a thunderstorm. 1. God appeared to him as his all-sufficient protector. A refuge impregnable, ever accessible, and everlasting. 2. God appeared as his triumphant deliverer. The description of God moving for his deliverance is grandly poetic. This poetic description is both natural and religious. Three observations are suggested—(1) It is a movement in answer to prayer. (2) It is a movement sublimely grand. (3) It is a movement completely effective. III. A SOUL ALIVE WITH TRUE SENTIMENTS. 1. Love. Love to God is the essence of goodness, and the sum-total of man’s obligation. 2. Trust. This is connected with love. True love has respect to excellence, and will ever lead to trusting. 3. Praise. “I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.” Worship is heaven. (*Homilist.*) *Love to God possible*:—“I cannot love God,” said a thoughtless man, “for I have never seen Him.” “Canst thou not?” replied his companion. “Then thou canst do less than the little blind girl who sits under the shade of the chestnut tree on the village green. She can love her father and mother, though she has never seen them, and will never see them till the latest hour of her life.” *Jesus is my love*:—The Lollards’ Tower in London, constructed by Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his palace at Lambeth, at the cost of six hundred pounds, was often filled with persons accused of heresy. The walls of this dungeon still bear witness to the sorrows and hopes of those who suffered in this place. The words “*Jesus amor meus*” (Jesus is my Love), written by some poor martyr, may still be seen upon the wall in the Lollards’ Tower. *David’s thanksgiving for his deliverance*:—Many songs of thanksgiving were composed by David. Perhaps it would be too bold for us to say that this Psalm excels them all; but we may say without hesitation, that none of them excels this. I. OF DAVID’S DELIVERANCE FROM THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES. In the early part of David’s life he obtained signal instances of God’s preserving mercy. A lion and a bear came to destroy a lamb of his fold; David had the courage to attack both these fierce animals in defence of the young of his flock, and the Lord delivered him. A great deliverance was granted to himself, and through him to his people, when the Lord delivered into his hand the terrible giant of Gath. Many and wonderful were the deliverances which he obtained from Saul. David sometimes thought it necessary for himself to leave the Lord’s land and to seek refuge among strangers, who were not such heathens as many of his own people. Among them, too, he found protection and obtained great deliverances. The king of Moab behaved to him with kindness, so far as we know. Among the Philistines he was more than once in extreme danger. But the Lord was still his stay and his helper. When the Philistines were brought low by many terrible engagements, David was still exposed to great perils, but the Lord preserved him whithersoever he went. Neither Moabites, nor Ammonites, nor Syrians of different kingdoms could stand before him, either singly or in conjunction, for the Lord taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight. But when the Lord had given him rest from his enemies round about, evil rose up against him out of his own kingdom and out of his own house. Sheba rose up after Absalom to seek his life, but he soon lost his own, as his predecessor in wickedness had done. These were some of David’s deliverances from his many visible enemies; and they were attended and sweetened by other deliverances, not less, but still more important. He was sometimes almost overwhelmed by fear and dejection of spirit. He was often in great bodily distress; but he cried unto the Lord and was healed (Psa. xxx.). But the most dangerous of his troubles were those which he suffered from the law in his members warring against the law in his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members.



II. OF GOD AS THE DELIVERER OF DAVID. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Psa. iii. 8). Everywhere we find him giving to the Lord the glory of the salvation wrought for him. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. The God of my rock, in Him will I trust: He is my shield and the horn of my salvation; my high tower and my refuge, my Saviour, Thou savest me from violence" (2 Sam. xxii. 2, 3). "For who is God save the Lord? Who is a rock save our God?" (2 Sam. xxii. 32). We know that there were many heroes who obtained a just and glorious name for the valiant exploits which they performed in the defence of their king and country. One of them had the honour of preserving the life of David when the hand of a terrible giant was lifted up against him. And there were many besides his mighty men to whom he was greatly indebted for signal service. His life was at one time saved by the kindness and wit of his wife Michal, at another time by the good offices of Jonathan, and even the Philistines were at one time made the instruments of preserving the life of that champion of Israel who was to be the destroyer of their power. But we never find David employing his fine genius in celebrating the exploits of these heroes to whom he was so greatly indebted. God is pleased for the most part to employ means and instruments in His works of mercy or of vengeance. But they do neither less nor more than God has intended to accomplish by them. It was God who made use of the Philistines for the salvation of David at Selah-hammah-lekoth. They were far from meaning so, neither did their heart think so. God employed not only men on earth, but the angels of heaven, for the deliverance of David from his enemies, and therefore, in his commendations of the goodness of God to himself, he assures us that the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear the Lord, and delivers them. "Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord persecute them" (Psa. xxxv.). Whatever were the means employed for the deliverances of David, no doubt was left in the mind of any reasonable man concerning the great Author of his salvation. The Lord gave us sensible proofs of His presence with David and of His indignation against his enemies, as if He had in the literal sense bowed the heavens and come down. Had we hearts like David we would often be rejoicing in God, and singing His praises, when our corrupt dispositions prompt us to utter complaints as if God had forgotten to be gracious, because He will not resign the management of all our affairs into our own hands.

III. OF THIS PSALM OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR ALL HIS DELIVERANCES. In this Psalm we find David expressing—1. The ardour of his love to that God who had blessed him with so many and such wonderful deliverances. Dearly he loved the God of his salvation, before he needed any of the deliverances which gave occasion to this Psalm. But every new deliverance increased the ardour of his love. 2. We find him expressing his firm reliance on God as the God of his salvation. His faith was powerfully invigorated by every new deliverance. And would we not greatly dishonour Him if we withheld from Him our confidence after a thousand proofs of His special favour? (Psa. xviii. 2, 3). 3. He expatiates on the greatness, on the grace, on the glory of these salvations which had been wrought for him. He illustrates the greatness of the salvations by representing the dreadful danger from which he was delivered. The terrors of death had fallen upon him. He was like a brand plucked out of the burning, or like a man raised out of the grave. His deliverance was the answer of fervent cries addressed to God from the depths into which he was cast. We are too much disposed to look with a careless eye on the great works of God. 4. He celebrates the excellency of those Divine perfections which were manifested in his deliverance. He shews forth the glory of that righteousness which appeared in the gracious rewards bestowed on himself, and the vengeance inflicted on his wicked enemies. He shows forth the glory of the Lord as the God of salvation, who had given striking and incontestable proofs of His saving power and grace in the salvations wrought for him. None of the gods of the nations had ever given any proofs of their power to save their worshippers that trusted in them. Great things God had done for David. David had himself performed wonderful things, and achieved victories that were to make him famous through all generations. But not to himself, but to his God was the praise due. 5. He praises God, and expresses his unshaken confidence in Him for the great things that were yet to be done for him, and for his seed after him. On the whole, we are taught by this Psalm what improvement we ought to make of the great works of God, recorded in His Word. If David saw and admired and celebrated in such strains of rapture his deliverance from the hand of his enemies, can we sufficiently admire the glory that shines forth in the whole train of providential

administration recorded in the volume of inspiration? Manifold were the salvations wrought by God for Abraham and Jacob, for Moses and the people of Israel. Nor ought we to forget any of God's deliverances wrought for ourselves. Nor ought we to forget the obligations that lie upon us to praise God for our friends and brethren. (*G. Lawson.*) **The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.—Shutting the gates of Derry:—**In token of his gratitude to Jehovah for deliverance from Saul's malevolence, David wrote this Psalm, a glowing composition, in which martial smiles abound. Thanksgiving is not only a national, but an individual duty. There are few to-day who seem to apprehend this obligation. With simple truthfulness it might be affirmed of most of us—"Prayers are many, thanks are rare. How many of us who, in critical moments and in sad emergencies, resorted to our God for deliverance and protection, sought His presence again when He heard our prayer and saw our tears?" Not without deep meaning and subtle experience of human perversity did David write, "I will pay Thee my vows which I spake with my mouth when I was in trouble." (*M. B. Hogg, B.A.*) **The horn of my salvation.—**"*The horn of my salvation*":—The allusion here is doubtful. Some have supposed the reference to be to the horns of animals, by which they defend themselves and attack their enemies. "God is to me, does for me, what their horns do for them." Others consider it as referring to the well-established fact, that warriors were accustomed to place horns, or ornaments like horns, on their helmets. The horn stands for the helmet; and "the helmet of salvation" is an expression equivalent to "a saving, a protecting helmet." Others consider the reference as to the corners or handles of the altar in the court of the tabernacle or temple, which are called its horns. Others suppose the reference to be to the highest point of a lofty and precipitous mountain, which we are accustomed to call its peak. No doubt, in the Hebrew language, horn is used for mountain, as in Isaiah v. 1. A very fertile mountain is called a horn of oil. The sense is substantially the same whichever of these views we take; though, from the connection with "shield" or "buckler," I am induced to consider the second of these views as the most probable. It seems the same idea as that expressed (Psa. cxl. 7), "Thou hast covered," and Thou wilt cover "my head in the day of battle." (*John Brown.*)

Ver. 3. **I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.—***The object, nature, and effect of prayer:—*Few men have known more of the variegated scenes of human life than David. **I. DAVID'S PURPOSE.** "I will call upon the Lord." Here we have what he declares concerning the Lord—that He is "worthy to be praised." By considering why we praise men we may be furnished with reasons why God is worthy to be praised. 1. We praise men for the beauty of their persons. 2. For the largeness of their minds. But what are all the intellectual attainments of mortals compared with the infinite mind of God? 3. For the benevolence of their hearts; for their tender sympathetic feelings towards the objects of distress. Then how much does God deserve our praise for His benevolence? This in God is universal, absolute, wonderful, and perpetual. "His mercy endureth for ever." 4. For the liberality of their actions. God scatters His gifts with a most liberal hand. That we may conceive how worthy God is to be praised, consider Him not only in His absolute, but also in His relative character. As a friend, a king, a father. Man's excellency is derived, God's attributes and perfections are essentially His own. **II. DAVID'S CONFIDENCE.** Or what he asserts relative to himself. His purpose was pious, rational, scriptural, necessary, and beneficial. He says, "I shall be saved from mine enemies." This supposes—1. That he had enemies. 2. That he was in danger from his enemies. And 3. That he had no expectation of saving himself. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Vers. 4-6. **The sorrows of death compassed me.—***Estimating our sorrows:—*No attempt is here made to diminish the severity of the crisis. Often when a great agony is overpast, the sufferer himself forgets its intensity and is inclined to think that it might have been cured by less ostentatious means than had been adopted for its pacification. We are seldom critically correct in the recollection of our sorrows. We either unduly magnify them, or we so far modify their intensity as to make any remedial measures look as simple and superficial as possible. David vividly remembered all his afflictive experience. He does not hesitate to speak of that experience in words which are metaphorical, if not romantic, without at all affecting the reality of the trouble through which he had passed. He says, "the

sorrows of death compassed" him. Some have interpreted this expression as birth-pangs; others, again, have used the word cords. It has been thought that the figure of the hunter in the next verse, in which we read of the "snares of death," fixes the meaning there to be cords. In Samuel, David represents himself as submerged or overwhelmed by the progress or waves of the trouble which had been made to pass over him. Sometimes, indeed, we do not know what real trouble we have been in until we have been removed from it for some distance, and thus enabled to contemplate it in its totality. Again and again the mind exclaims concerning the impossibility that such and such trouble can really have been survived. We are familiar with the experience which declares that certain afflictions could not possibly be borne a second time. It is well to bear in memory our greatest sorrows, that we may also recollect our greatest deliverances. There is no true piety in undervaluing the darkness and the horror through which the soul has passed. Instead of making light of the most tragical experiences of life, we should rather accumulate them, that we may see how wondrous has been the interposition of the Divine hand, and how adequate are the resources of heaven to all the necessities of this mortal condition. Even admitting the words to be metaphorical, they present a vivid picture of what human sorrow may be,—whatever may be rationally imagined may be actually undergone; as to David's consciousness, what is here stated was a matter of the sternest reality. It should be borne in mind, too, that trouble is a different thing to different men, even when it comes in the same guise and quantity. Much must depend upon temperament. Things animate suffer; things inanimate do not respond to the blow with which they are struck. The poetic temperament is the most suffering of all. According to the sensitiveness of the nature is the terribleness of the stroke which falls upon it. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *David's afflictions and fears:*—We never can be duly thankful to God if we forget the troubles which we have suffered, and the distress of our souls when they were pressing us down. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." When Paul speaks of a great deliverance bestowed upon him in Asia, he says that God had delivered him from so great a death. In another passage he protests that he died daily. I. OF THE GREAT DISTRESSES AND DANGERS OF DAVID. David probably enjoyed such happiness and tranquillity as this evil world can afford before he was anointed by Samuel to be king over Israel; but almost from that time, whilst he was yet in early youth, his troubles commenced. His sore distresses were not at an end when he was advanced to the throne. But the greatest of all his dangers after his advancement to the kingdom was that to which he was exposed by his unnatural son Absalom, and his treacherous counsellor Ahithophel. II. THE CONSIDERATION OF THE STATE OF HIS MIND UNDER HIS TROUBLES. 1. Great sorrow often obtained possession of his soul. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," or encompassed with sorrow even unto death. And as David was an eminent type of that blessed person, his sorrows may be considered as an emblem of those unequalled sorrows which seized on our Redeemer when He was bearing our iniquities. Poverty, exile, reproach, and danger of life are evils which make a deep impression of grief upon the minds of most men, especially when they meet together; and David, though a wise and an holy man, was not exempt from the feelings of human nature. But David was often compelled to dwell amongst men who without cause were his enemies (Psa. lvi.). And his friends were afraid to perform the offices of friendship. But exile is more distressing to a lover of his country than poverty. It was peculiarly distressing to an Israelite indeed, who could not leave his country without leaving behind him the sanctuary of his God. "They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods. Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar." His heart was broken with reproach whilst he heard the slanders of many. Continual dangers to himself and to his adherents could not fail to fill his mind with great uneasiness. He had indeed promises which assured him of a happy event to himself, but there is no wonder that his faith of these promises was sometimes shaken. But to his grief for himself, and for his friends, let us add what he felt for his country, for the indignities done to his God, and even for the guilt and misery which his enemies were bringing upon themselves, and we shall see that he drunk deeper than most other men have done in any age of the cup of affliction. He hated and abhorred every false way, and therefore he was pierced with grief at the sight and hearing of that wickedness which everywhere abounded. 2. Great fear often seized upon him. The floods of ungodly men made him afraid. But of whom was he afraid? Did he think that the Lord had



forgotten to be gracious, and had in anger shut up His tender mercies? Surely he was a firm believer in the mercy and faithfulness of God. And yet his faith had a great fight to endure. It was sore tried by many enemies and by hard dispensations of providence. In days of great temptation it is very difficult to restrain those corrupt reasonings by which faith is embarrassed. What if he had made God his enemy? He surely deserved to be rebuked in God's indignation, and chastised in His sore displeasure. God was true to His word, but His faithfulness was not sullied by destroying in the desert that generation which He brought out of Egypt, although they had the promise of entering into God's rest, which would have been fulfilled to them if they had not come short of it through their own unbelief. Such might be the workings of David's mind at the times when a deep consciousness of guilt, and a terrifying sense of Divine displeasure discomposed his mind, although during the great part even of the days of tribulation he could glorify God by an unshaken confidence. No man is always himself. David could often say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" But at other times he cried out in the agony of his soul, "I am cut off from Thine eyes; I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me; I am gone like the shadow when it declineth; I am tossed up and down as the locust." III. WHY GOD SUFFERED THE HOLY MAN TO BE BROUGHT INTO SUCH CALAMITOUS SITUATIONS. May we not reasonably hope, that those men whom God blesses with His special favour will be preserved from those sorrows and fears which are the just portion of the wicked? Can He not by His Divine power, by which He rules over the world, set them high above all their enemies, and fill their mouths at all times with songs of triumph? Undoubtedly He can, and undoubtedly He would do it if He saw that it would tend to their best advantage. 1. His faith was tried and approved. We are called to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of our faith worketh patience. Some remains of unbelief were found in David when his faith was tried as it were by fire (Psa. xxvii. 13, 14, cxviii.). 2. His sore afflictions were means for quickening his devotions. Never was there a more fervent suppliant at the throne of grace. 3. He learned from his sore adversities the value of the Word of God. He learned the value of its promises, its precepts, its warning, its histories. 4. Those graces were improved in him by his afflictions, to the exercise of which he was to be called in the days of his prosperity—his humility, his meekness, his humanity and tenderness of heart to the poor and afflicted. David would not have been such an excellent model for kings as he was if he had obtained the throne like his successors, by hereditary right, without passing to it through a great fight of afflictions. The experience of misery taught him to pity and succour the miserable. 5. His great and sore afflictions prepared the way for those marvellous loving-kindnesses which inspired him with joy and praise. He would not have spoken so rapturously on many occasions of the salvations wrought for him by the God of his salvation if he had not tasted the bitter dregs of the cup of affliction. 6. He was designed to be an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ in his sufferings and in his exaltation. Many of his Psalms speak of the sufferings and glory of Christ under the figure of his own sufferings and glory. 7. The Church in every age was to derive unspeakable benefit from David's sufferings. Improvement—1. Think it not strange that you must endure many chastisements and trials in the world. Are your afflictions equal in number or greatness to David's? 2. Admire the providence of God. He knows how to execute His purposes by means which seem calculated to defeat them. 3. Be ready to meet with every occurrence in the course of your lives. You do not know what evil shall befall you; but you know that man is born to trouble. Whilst you enjoy peace and quietness, be thankful but not secure. (*G. Lavson.*) **The floods of ungodly men made me afraid.**—*Excessive wickedness destructive to a nation:*—By the overflowing of ungodliness the holy writer may be presumed to mean an uncommon prevalence of wickedness exceeding its ordinary measure and proportion in the world. The image represents to us impiety grown to the height of insolence, regardless of all rules and unrestrained by discipline. 1. Ungodliness may rise to such a pitch of insolence as to be without restraint from laws or authority. The truth of fact is apparent from all histories; and it cannot be wondered at that, when the fear of God and the remonstrances of conscience have lost their force, all human authority proves weak and ineffectual. Civil government is ordained for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well, and whenever it is duly executed it promotes and secures the happiness of society; but unless it

be assisted, supported, and conducted by religion, all its strength will be but weakness, and all its wisdom folly. If the magistrate be without any restraint from conscience and religion, the provision of laws will become of little effect. And if the subjects of any community are without any sense of the obligations of conscience and unrestrained by religion, human laws will be found but a weak provision for peace and justice among them. 2. Whenever this is the case there is reason to apprehend the greatest evils in consequence of it. Consider the miserable consequences which even naturally must attend it. When all the wild lusts and passions of corrupt nature are let loose to their several pursuits, unrestrained by Divine and human laws, no person is secured from injury, no property from fraud or rapine. Consider such a land as exposed to the vengeance of an offended God. The natural effects of prevailing impiety are indeed properly inflictions of God, they execute an established rule and constitution of providence, by which it is ordained that all sin should be attended with some immediate punishment. But the justice of God often visits the wicked with some more signal and extraordinary inflictions. 3. What conduct is in duty and prudence required from all who are in view of such a danger. (1) The ministers of God are by a peculiar call and obligation required to lift up their voice and cry aloud, to warn the people of their transgressions. They are placed as watchmen, and as they that must give account. Besides the special duties of those who are distinguished by a public character, every private subject who has any zeal for the glory of God, or any concern for the welfare of his country, must labour together with them, and according to his station and capacities endeavour to dispel the cloud and divert the impending ruin. (2) By a resolute application of private reproof and admonition, by a just and open detestation of impiety, and by a vigorous assistance to the magistrate in the assertion of his authority, and the execution of all good laws, to repress the insolence of wicked men, and make the workers of iniquity ashamed. (3) Upon the whole, every one who fears God will under so just an apprehension of His judgments set himself with all his strength and with all his might to reduce within bounds the overflowing of ungodliness, and recall the spirit and practice of religion. If this happy effect can be obtained by the united labours and prayers of good men, God will be entreated for the land and turn away His anger from it. (*J. Rogers, D.D.*)

Ver. 7. **Then the earth shook and trembled.**—*Earthquakes, their moral suggestions:*—It is not for us to speculate concerning the physical causes of earthquakes. With the Bible in our hands we are privileged to regard the mightiest and the most destructive forces of nature as the ministers of His will “who is wise in counsel, benevolent in purpose, and almighty in power.” I. **THE PERILOUS CONDITION OF OUR EARTHLY EXISTENCE.** Deep is the sense of insecurity which the earthquake strikes to our inward souls. But this is only one out of many perils that every moment threaten our destruction. This insecurity shows—1. The absurdity of setting our affections on material good. Set your affection on things above. 2. The folly of postponing the preparation for eternity. How absurd to presume one minute upon the future, when every minute is uncertain. II. **THE PROBABILITY OF A COMING CRISIS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR PLANET.** Geology teaches that the subterraneous forces of the earth have effected wonderful crises in its history. It is only natural to suppose that the forces which swept away races that preceded them will one day sweep man from its sphere, and make the earth the habitation of other races of existences yet to be created. Science gives a testimony concerning a coming crisis that is positive and satisfactory. The Bible assures us that a crisis awaits the world (2 Pet. iii.). III. **THE ELEMENT OF SEVERITY IN THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.** Storms, pestilences, famines, and earthquakes attest severity in the government of God. 1. The sinner deserves the severity. 2. The sinner requires the severity. IV. **THE WISDOM OF SEEKING THE DIVINE PROTECTION.** 1. That protection can be obtained through a practical reliance on the mediation of Christ for acceptance. 2. The protection has been obtained. The ancient believers enjoyed it. 3. The protection secures from all danger. Then is God *your* protector? (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 11. **His pavilions round about Him were . . . thick clouds of the skies.**—*The ministry of the cloud:*—His pavilions are thick clouds! Then the cloud is not a destructive libertine, some stray, haphazard, lawless force, the grim parent of shadow and chill and tempest! “His pavilions are thick clouds.” The clouds are the dwelling-places of God. He lives in them; He moves through them; He pervades them

with the gentle ministries of grace and love. "The clouds drop down their dew." Then the clouds are more than shutters; they are springs. They do more than exclude the sunlight; they are the parents of the fertilising rains, and the drenching mists and dews. It is something of a triumph when we have got thus far in our religious faith. The cloud may hide the light; it does not destroy it. The cloud does not disprove the light; it is really the proof of the light. Without the warm and genial light there could be no cloud; the cloud is the creation of light. When, therefore, the cloud is forming, it means the sun is working. Raindrops can be traced to sunbeams. Love yearns to send a gentle rain, and so love prepares a cloud. So, the cloud is part of the answer to our prayer for dew. If, therefore, I have been asking my God for a softening, fertilising rain, I must not be discomfited by the appearance of a chilling and darkening cloud. If I have been asking for a drenching baptism of dew, I must not lose my heart when there comes a confusing mist. We asked the Lord to bless our nation; there came a chilling disappointment; the answer was in a cloud! Have you ever noticed how many of the dispositions of the perfected life can only be richly gained in the baptism of shadow and tears? And when I contemplate the dispositions which are the creations of the Spirit I feel that for their perfect nourishing something is needed of moistness and of shade. Here is a short list of the beautiful things: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." I am more inclined to call them ferns than flowers! I don't think they would come to any luxurious profusion and beauty if they were grown in the prolonged and cloudless glare! Here is an exquisite fern—"gentleness." Where will you find it growing in richest profusion? You will find it growing in the life that has known the shadow and the tear. There is no touch so tenderly gentle as the touch of the wounded hand. There is no speech so insinuatingly sympathetic as the speech of those who have been folded about by the garment of night. Gentleness is a fern, and it requires the ministry of the cloud. Here is another rare and beautiful fern—"long-suffering." How can you grow that in the "garish day"? "Long-suffering" is a fern, and it needs the ministry of the cloud. And is it otherwise with the ferns of "goodness" and "love"? How this love-fern expands when life passes into the shadow; when husband or child is laid low, how love puts on strength and beauty, whether the lover be peasant-wife or queen! Now, I do not think we have any difficulty in perceiving the influence of the cloud in the individual life. "In my distress Thou hast enlarged me." Enlarged! It is a very spacious word, and includes the complementary meanings of broadening and enrichment. "In my cloud-experience Thou hast enriched me!" A man goes into the cloud rough and boorish, and full of domineering aggression, and he emerges from its ministry strangely softened and refined! He entered the cloud hard and dry as a pavement; he emerges with disposition suggestive of the fernery. "In my distress Thou hast enriched me!" But the cloud experience is not only the minister of enrichment, but also of enlargement! It is in the cloud that men grow the fern of a spacious tolerance. Narrowness is transformed to breadth. In the personal life, if it were not for the cloud we should become and remain dry and infertile as Sahara; it is the providential cloud that calls forth the hidden growth, the sleeping ferns, and transforms the dustheap into a thing of grace and beauty. It is not otherwise with the ministry of the cloud in the sphere of the home. There is many a family which never realises its unity until it is enveloped in the folds of a chilling cloud. Health and luxury are too often divisive; sickness and sorrow are wondrous cements. Luxury nourishes a thoughtless individualism; adversity discovers hidden and profounder kinships. "We shall know each other better when the mists have rolled away!" Ah! but we sometimes never know each other until we meet together in the mist! It is in the common cloud that the family finds its kinship. It is in our sorrow that deep calletth unto deep, and our communion is revealed. Is it otherwise in the larger life and family of the nations? Does the cloud-ministry exercise its influence in the State? Surely we may say that the common life of a people is deepened and enriched by the ministry of the shade. A people is not consolidated by common material interests and aims. It is not by free trade or by reciprocity that we shall forge the links of enduring fellowships. Juxtaposition is not fellowship. It is not the prosperous glare that makes us one. We fall apart in the noontide; we draw closer to each other in the night. It is in the national clouds and shadows, and in the nation's tears that you will find the forces of a true consolidation. The clouds, in their courses, have been the friends of the national life. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)



Ver. 13. **The Lord also thundered in the heavens.**—*The terrors of an Eastern thunderstorm*:—There is said to be something peculiarly terrific in an Oriental thunderstorm. Its vivid lightning and intense darkness, succeeding each other with startling rapidity, are appalling. This is indicated in the words, “at the brightness that was before Him, His thick clouds passed”; that is, passed away. So intense is the light of the lightning’s flash that the whole mass of dark clouds seems to pass away, and their place to be occupied for an instant by a mass of solid light, shedding its beams over everything upon the earth like a midday sun. The light, however, is only for an instant—and then a darkness, that may be felt, shuts up the whole from every vision but *His*, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. Meanwhile the roar of the thunder, the voice of the Most High in the clouds, is incessant; the lightnings flashing from cloud to cloud, from the clouds to the earth, and from the earth back again to the clouds. Moreover, it seems as if He who measureth the waters in the hollow of His hand had poured them out, for the rain descends in torrents, mingled at times with destructive hail, while coals of fire—balls of meteoric flame—run along the ground (Exod. ix. 23). (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

Ver. 16. **He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.**—*Divine interpositions*:—We are not as those who believe in two co-existent forces, each supreme, one of whom shall create disasters, and the other distribute blessings. The prince of evil is, according to our faith, subordinate to the great Lord of all. Everywhere is God, and in all things His hand is present; in the things which seem to us evil, as well as in the events which appear to us good, God is at work. We freely admit that we do not understand this, and therefore we do not attempt to explain it; but we believe and adore. We need not try to justify the ways of God with men, for He asks no defence at our hands. If there is a providence, why are such terrible evils permitted? I. **MIRACULOUS INTERPOSITIONS IN THE CALAMITIES OF THIS LIFE ARE NOT TO BE EXPECTED.** 1. Such interpositions would change the whole arrangement of the world. 2. If interpositions were given to save the lives of godly men alone, as some would have it, then this world would become the place of judgment, which it is not intended to be. 3. If God were to interpose in the case of all calamities it would involve many evils. It would encourage idleness, neglect of sanitary laws, carelessness, &c. 4. Divine interpositions of a miraculous sort would not be attended with the advantage to the ungodly which we might suppose, because if there were miracles of mercy on the behalf of God’s people to snatch them from a watery grave or other perils, then we might expect to have, and naturally should have, miracles of judgment too. II. **PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITIONS ARE FREQUENT AMONG GOD’S PEOPLE.** They come in the way of deliverance from floods of trouble. “He took me, He drew me out of many waters.” He does this not by miracles. He violates no law of nature, but yet delivers in a marvellous way. He does not quench the violence of the flame, yet a precious life is saved from a burning building. The Lord allows all the forces of nature to drive on in their ordinary course, and yet the outcome of it all is, that His servant is delivered and his prayers are answered. This He does in various ways. The sick are restored to health. Business is made to prosper. Enemies are turned to friends, or they die, like Haman. Then believe in the unexpected. Believe that God will do for you something which you know nothing about. The Lord always has a plan in reserve. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Deliverance out of deep waters*:—The testimonies of experience are always welcome to us. In sickness, those of the experienced physician. In battle, those of the proved commander. This Psalm seems to be a leaf taken out of David’s private diary. I. **LET US INQUIRE WHENCE IT WAS THAT GOD TOOK DAVID.** “He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.” The term “waters” is used in the Scriptures to express a state of trouble and mental disquietude. Apart from the naturalness of the image as descriptive of something which overwhelms, and desolates, and lays waste, to an Eastern mind this image would have a peculiar force and beauty; for in the mountainous parts of Judea, even as in Switzerland to this very day, the people were liable to sudden inundations, which would sweep away flocks and herds, towns and villages, in their disastrous and overwhelming torrent. Well, David says, “God drew me out of many waters”; intimating, first, his deliverance from the depths of outward danger. And as from many dangers, so from many sorrows had God taken David out. Think of the sorrow of his exile, the sorrows so many and terrible that came upon him through his great sin. And yet

God took him out of them all. But sickness, bereavement, exile were not David's deepest waters; but sin, the displeasure of God, merited condemnation for his offences, who could hold up the head in such waters? "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The image in the text is commonly used in connection with David's sins. The penitential Psalms will be found to abound with such allusions. "Out of the depths have I cried," &c. "I am come unto deep waters." "Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves." His sins had plunged him into many deep waters. And as with sorrows, so with sins, have we not known a like experience to that of David? May not the same confession of misery which they caused us, and of God's gracious deliverance out of them, come truly from our lips? "God," says Bunyan, "will sometimes cleave a saint with a wedge of his own timber," that is, He will make him feel the consequences of his own sin, in order that the bitterness of his distress may draw him to a better choice. But to draw a struggling man out of the waters and to take no further care of him—to leave him on the brink of the same pit, and liable again to make shipwreck in the same sea, this is not the way of Him "whose work is perfect"; and therefore we inquire, not only whence God took David, but—II. **WHITHER HE TOOK HIM.** This David beautifully expresses in the 40th Psalm. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Here, then, we have the deliverance perfected. Not only is he raised from the depths, but he is exalted to the heights; not only is he drawn out of the waters, but he is set upon a rock. Fear is superseded by the tranquillities of the promise; a calm conscience stills the agitations of despair. In all your afflictions, therefore, whether of "mind, body, or estate," trust to the arm which once drew you out of the waters. You are safe where He would draw you; it is even to the rock of His protection, to the secret of His pavilion, to the covering of His arm, to the tower of His great name. And so your comfort is, that if the waters be many, the succours shall be many. God will "send from above"; grace from above to deliver you, promises from above to cheer you, a Spirit from above to guide you, a Saviour from above to defend and bless you. When your race is over, when your struggles are finished, and when you are landed safely on the eternal shores, then to the God of all grace shall you sing this song of praise: "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters." (*Daniel Moore, M.A.*) *Saved from the depths:*—Jewels long hidden under the lava flood at Pompeii have been recovered undimmed, and divers have recently been searching for valuable gems lost in the sea near Trieste in 1822. When the river overflowed the summer palace of the Shah of Persia at Lar he fled in such haste that his jewels were forgotten. An astute officer of the court gave orders that the banks of the river were to be searched when the flood had subsided, and by this means he restored the jewels to his master, and was rewarded by being promoted to high rank. (*W. Y. Fullerton.*)

**Vers. 20-27. The Lord reward me according to my righteousness.**—*Of the justice of David's behaviour:*—I. **DAVID'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Righteousness consists in rendering to all their due, and the revealed will of God is the standard of it (*Deut. vi. 25*). As we are under infinitely greater obligations to perform our duty to God than we can be under to perform any services to our fellow-men, righteousness includes in it that piety which has God for its object, as well as the performance of those duties to which our neighbours have a right. Yet it is not seldom used to denote the rectitude of our dispositions and conduct to our fellow-men, as godliness denotes right tempers and behaviour towards God. David laid it down as his settled purpose to walk in the law of the Lord, the great standard of righteousness, and through Divine mercy he was enabled to keep his resolution inviolable through the course of his life. He did not pretend to perfection. He referred all his actions to the glory of God; he loved His testimonies with his whole heart, and took pleasure in the habitation of His house. He made use of all his power to advance the honour of his God. 1. He behaved righteously towards King Saul, his first and great enemy. He was just to all his fellow-subjects whilst he lived under the government of Saul. He acquired a high reputation for the prudence with which he managed all his affairs, and he would not have attained this honest fame if he had not abstained from all appearance of evil. We have no reason to form the least doubt of the care that David took, when he was an outlaw and a fugitive, to keep his followers from using any unwarrantable means for the supply of their wants, although they must often have been in extreme poverty. We have a testimonial from Nabal's servants of the honesty of David's men, and even of their generous

care of Nabal's substance, at a time when the good man was almost reduced to beggary. We have no reason to doubt of David's rectitude of behaviour in all the dealings that he had with strangers. He had transactions in the time of his troubles with the king of Moab, to whom he committed the care of his father and mother when they could no longer dwell with safety at Bethlehem. We have no further account of any dealings with that prince, although we afterwards find him carrying on a bloody war with the Moabites. We have not the means of knowing whether the king of Moab had provoked this war by cruelty to David's father and mother; but we can have no doubt that the cause of the war was just on David's part. After the kind treatment which he received from the king of Gath, he took Gath out of the hands of the Philistines, but the Philistines themselves were the authors of the war. David in his government was a man of blood, but in his disposition he was a man of peace. A necessity was laid upon him to fight the battles of the Lord, and of the people of the Lord. When he was advanced to the throne of Israel it is testified of him that he did justice and judgment to all his people. He tells us (Psa. lxxv., ci.) how he intended to govern his family and his kingdom, and doubtless, as far as human infirmity would permit, he kept his resolution. Gratitude may well be considered as an ingredient of justice. We owe returns of love and of the proper fruits of it to friends who love us, and who are glad to serve us according to the best of their abilities. David's gratitude to his benefactors was a remarkable part of his character. We find him sending presents of the spoils gained in battle to those places where he and his men were accustomed to haunt. When Saul was dead he was so far from expressing resentment against him, that he inquired whether there were any left of his family, that he might show them the kindness of God for Jonathan's sake. And many years afterwards he showed that Jonathan was not forgotten by him, when he took care to secure Mephibosheth from the destruction brought upon the family of Saul, at the requisition of the Gibeonites. He was grateful for favours even to those heathens from whom he received any kindness. Nahash, king of the Ammonites, showed kindness on some occasions to David, perhaps rather from hatred to Saul than goodwill to the poor man whom Saul oppressed. Yet David showed kindness unto Hanun, the son of Nahash, for his father's sake. Righteousness in a king will dispose him to an impartial execution of the laws against criminals. A wise king crusheth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them. But how was this consistent with the favour showed to Joab and to Absalom? Did he not know that God had forbidden any satisfaction to be taken for the life of a murderer? Yes, he knew it very well, and took measures even when he was dying that Joab's grey hairs should not come down to the grave without blood. It is perhaps impossible entirely to justify him for suffering that bloody man to live so long above the ground. Yet never was lenity to a criminal more excusable. Seldom has a prince or a nation been more indebted to a subject than David and his people were to Joab for brilliant services. And it appears to have been almost impracticable to bring to condign punishment a man so popular, and of such power in the army as Joab. David himself made this excuse for himself when he said, "These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too strong for me." We may observe likewise that David was once indebted for his own life to Abishai, the brother of Joab, who seems to have had some share in the blood of Abner. He might with some appearance of reason think that he owed a life to the family of his sister Zeruiah, or that at least he might incline to the favourable side when plausible reasons could be advanced for their exculpation. We cannot pretend to vindicate his behaviour in the case of Uriah. But we cannot reprobate that part of his conduct in stronger language than David himself did. We may make the same observation concerning another instance of David's procedure, which has given occasion to animadversions on his conduct; I mean the charge given to Solomon concerning Shimei. "Behold thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless, for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him, but his hoary head bring thou down to the grave with blood." We might have observed that fidelity in performing engagements is an essential part of justice in which it cannot be supposed that David would be deficient. But how could David observe his promise and oath to Shimei if he brought down the hairs of Shimei with blood to the grave by the hands of Solomon? A man is no less accountable for what he commands to be



done, than for what he does with his own hands. Can we reasonably suppose that David on his death-bed would commit an act of wickedness for which his memory might be detested by all who feared an oath? In fact, we find that the crime of cursing David at Mahanaim was not the ground of the sentence against Shimei, although the reason he had given by that crime to suspect his loyalty was the cause why he was laid under a prohibition of leaving Jerusalem under pain of death. But there is another reading of the last part of the charge equally agreeable to the words of the original, which clears the character of David from all blame. Neither bring down his grey hairs to the grave with blood; keep a strict eye over him as a man disaffected to my family; punish him for any new crime by which he may merit punishment, but let my oath be sacred, and bring not down his grey hairs to the grave with blood, for that crime which I swear by the Lord not to punish with death. Charity is essential to justice. There are duties which we owe to all men, by the second great commandment of the law, the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves. If David had not conscientiously observed this precept he could not have so often appealed to God, the Searcher of hearts, as the witness of his inviolable regard to these Divine testimonies, which were the light to his path and the lamp by which his feet were guided in the way of peace. II. GOD'S REGARD TO DAVID'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE DELIVERANCES GRANTED TO HIM FROM HIS ENEMIES. Without all doubt, David ascribed all the rich favours he received from God to that sovereign and free mercy to which every saint of God must be infinitely indebted (Psa. lxxxvi. 11, cxvi. 4, 5). He was sensible, like his father Jacob, that he was not worthy of the least of God's mercies, and that there was no merit in the least of his works (Psa. cxxxviii. 2, 3). But he knew at the same time that, through the infinite mercy of God, the good works of His people are accepted and rewarded by Him (Psa. xi. 6). Mercy and truth meet together in God, righteousness and peace kiss each other, and display their united glories in the administrations of His providence to His people. The Lord shows forth the exceeding riches of His grace in making them righteous, and when they are made righteous He shows both His grace and His justice in rewarding them according to their righteousness. There is so much sin mingled even with their good works that, if they were still under the law, they could not escape the condemnation at once of all their works, and of their persons likewise. But all their iniquities, and amongst other iniquities those which cleave to their holy things, are covered from God's sight. Their good works, therefore, cannot but be well-pleasing to God, and richly rewarded by Him. He will never be unrighteous to forget any of their works or labours of love, and therefore those who follow after righteousness shall have a sure reward. But did not David glory in himself rather than in the Lord when he spoke of his own righteousness in such high terms? This question leads us—III. TO CONSIDER DAVID'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS. He speaks with perfect assurance concerning the regard which God expressed to his righteousness. Is this the language of humility? It would indeed be very presumptuous to form and to express such a judgment concerning ourselves without searching our own hearts, without comparing them with the law of God, and without finding good evidence that our hearts are sound in God's statutes. But in none of these particulars had David been negligent. 1. He had searched his heart as well as his ways. "I thought," he says, "upon my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." He was far from thinking that his ways could be right unless his heart was right in the sight of God. 2. His standard by which he tried himself was the law of his God. He was fully sensible of the folly of trying himself by any other standard. 3. He found in his heart and ways an habitual conformity to the law of God. He was indeed constrained to acknowledge that in many things he had offended God. When he meditated on the admirable purity of the law he cried, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Yet he could with confidence say that he had hoped for God's salvation, and done His commandments. This conclusion he did not rashly form from the consideration of a few of his actions, or of the frame of his heart at some particular periods of his life. Many deceive themselves by forming a hasty judgment of themselves, founded on temporary impressions made upon their minds in some moments of seriousness, excited by some particular circumstance of providence, or by the transient influence of some Divine truths. He knew the deceitfulness of the heart of man, and that without Divine illumination he might easily deceive himself. He therefore referred himself to God, the Searcher of hearts, to preserve him from entertaining any false hopes of the goodness of his own condition (Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24).

IV. THE ASSURANCE WHICH DAVID HAD OF GOD'S RESPECT TO HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE DELIVERANCES GRANTED TO HIM BY HIS GRACIOUS PROVIDENCE. We must not place humility in an affected ignorance of what is true, either concerning our own personal righteousness or concerning God's acceptance of it. Nothing could be more dangerous than the presumption that God is well pleased with us if our way or our heart is perverse before Him (Mic. iii. 10-12). Nothing could be more unbecoming in a Christian than the forgetfulness of his infinite obligations to that grace which has blotted out his innumerable transgressions. Yet it is desirable for every child of God to be well assured of the cleanness of his hands in God's sight, and of the acceptance of his works as well as of his person. As it is our duty to pray to God for the acceptance of our services, it must be our duty likewise humbly and thankfully to acknowledge God's righteousness and grace in His dealings with us. The riches of Divine mercy appear in the acceptance of our works, and in the consequent rewards bestowed on them, as well as in the acceptance of our persons. Were it not that our iniquities are hidden from God's sight, such works as even David's could not have been rewarded by that God who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. "Go thy way," says Solomon, "eat thy bread with cheerfulness, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." If God does not accept our works, we can have no well-grounded pleasure in the bounties of His providence. On the whole learn—1. The great advantage of walking in the ways of God. "The Lord loveth him that followeth after righteousness. Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him." What reason have we to adore that plan of mercy which allows us to hope for Divine acceptance, and for the reward of our works done to please God, although they are so imperfect that we must daily seek from God the pardon of our iniquities. 2. God's people ought patiently to hold on in the way of righteousness amidst the most discouraging dispensations of providence. David had, after all his dismal days, a new song put into his mouth to magnify the Lord. 3. When we obtain deliverances it is our duty to consider how we behaved under our troubles. Yet we still ought to bless God for deliverances from trouble, although we should not dare to say that we have kept the way of God when we are under it. 4. Let us give praise to God for the great salvation wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ. The deliverances of David were salvations to all Israel. It is to be feared that many of us are totally destitute of righteousness. (*G. Lawson.*) *Justification by works*:—Why did God delight in David? The Psalmist declares that the ultimate reason was no arbitrary favouritism, but that God delighted in His servant because of his personal faith and character. David asserts the sincerity of his desire to please God; he asserts the uprightness of his conduct before God. The spirit of this appeal is far removed from Pharisaism; it is not an outburst of self-complacency and vaingloriousness, but the legitimate expression of conscious integrity. If the grace of God has done anything for us, why should we not simply and candidly realise and express the fact? Nothing succeeds like success, and we are ignoring a fountain of inspiration when we timidly shut our eyes to the clear evidences of the victories of the inner life. To the glory of God's grace let us honestly acknowledge to ourselves and others the growing dominion of righteousness in our soul. 1. God deals with us as we deal with Him. "Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me." God had dealt with him as he had dealt with God. He trusted God, and God delivered him; he loved God, and God delighted in him; he served God, and God honoured and blessed him. This is ever the great canon of the Divine rule. As we love God, He will love us. "We love God, because He first loved us"; but having known His love, there is a very true sense in which its proportion is henceforth determined by the measure of our reciprocation. As we trust God, He will succour us. A great faith sinks Alpine ranges to a plain, it crosses Atlantic depths dryshod. The lack of such faith entangles us in many embarrassments and miseries. As we serve God He will requite us. According to the measure of our love, faith, and service shall be our safety, strength, and bliss. Are any poor in joy, grace, power, and peace? Let them act more generously towards God. 2. God deals with us as we deal with one another (see vers. 25, 26). The great truth taught in these verses is, that God's dealing with us is regulated by our dealing with one another. This is the clear, full teaching of the whole of revelation. How mistaken are those who imagine spiritual religion to be anti-social. It is a common complaint that religious faith is a weakening, impoverishing, disintegrating influence in social life: the love given to God is supposed to be subtracted from our love to humanity; the service rendered to the kingdom of God

is considered as so much filched from the service of humanity. No mistake could be greater. God does not judge us apart from society, but strictly in and through our relation to it. As we deal with our brother the great Father deals with us. Some people are religious without being good; that is, they are not kind to their fellows, just, generous, truthful, helpful. This will not do. A true Christian is both religious and good. God does not test us by our ecclesiastical life, but by our social, human life. Social duty and spiritual prosperity are closely related. When we suffer stagnation of spiritual life we search for the reason in the neglect of Church fellowship or worship, the reading of God's Word, or of the sacraments; but the reason will just as often be found in our failure to do justly and to love mercy in our social relation. 3. God deals with us as we deal with ourselves. "I was also upright before Him." As we honour ourselves by keeping ourselves pure, God honours us by abundance of grace and peace. There is a true sense in which He accepts us according to our own valuation. If we reverence our body, hallow our gifts, prize our fair name, esteem our time and influence as choice treasure, God follows up such self-respect by great spiritual enrichment and blessing. If we would realise the fulness of blessing we must respect ourselves and keep from iniquity. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *God's interpositions*:—I. AS A VINDICATION OF HIS OWN CHARACTER. 1. He—David—regarded his character as very excellent. Of that excellency he speaks in terms emphatic and strong. Can his language be justified? Not in an absolute sense. Morally, in the sight of God, David was very far from a perfect man. It can be justified in an average sense, and in an official sense. 2. David regarded his character as divinely influential. Was he right in supposing that God came to his deliverance on account of what he was in himself, or on account of what he had done to serve Him? 1. Individual character is known to God. 2. Individual character is interesting to God. Nothing in the universe touches the heart of the Great Father so much as the moral character of His children. II. AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S MANIFESTATION. He rises to a view of the great principle with which God deals with all His moral creatures. As man is, so is God to him. This is true in two respects. 1. As a personal power. God treats man according to his character. 2. As a mental conception. Man's idea of God is his God, it is the deity he worships. Man worships the God he has imaged to himself; and men have different images, according to the state of their own hearts. The revengeful man has a God of vengeance, the sectarian man has a God of sects, the capricious man has a capricious God, the selfish man has a greedy God, the despotic man has an arbitrary God, and the loving man has a loving God. Our moral nature rises and falls with our conception of God, for "man must need assimilate himself to what he worships. "Every man copies the God in whom he believes." (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 23. **I was also upright before Him, and kept myself from mine iniquity.**—*The upright heart, and its darling sin*:—Things that David here takes notice of. 1. The greatness of the danger he was in. 2. The glory of his deliverance, regarded as an answer to prayer. 3. The fruit of it. The love of God is enlarged and inflamed. His confidence in God is enlarged. He is by this quickened and encouraged unto prayer. 4. The grounds of all these mercies. God's free grace. In the person to whom the mercy is bestowed; for as God stands in a peculiar covenant-relation to His people, so He hath a peculiar providence over them. God is with His people at all times, but He is nearest to them in the worst times. David shows wherein his sincerity doth appear. "I have not departed from God wickedly." "All His judgments were before me." "I was also upright before Him, and I kept me from mine iniquity." A sincere heart hath the most serious resolutions, the most unfeigned detestations, and therefore the greatest and the most diligent watchings against his own iniquity, that sin to which his nature is most prone, and wherein he is most apt to be ensnared. In the text are two things. I. DAVID'S PROFESSION OF HIS SINCERITY. There is a twofold perfection. A legal perfection, which is a perfect conformity in nature and in life to the law of God. This was not the perfection that David here spoke of, for his failings were known and confessed by himself. There is an evangelical perfection, according to the tenor of the second covenant, and this is twofold: a perfection of justification, and a perfection of sanctification. There is a walking with God, before God, and after God; that is, in reference to the precepts of God, the providences of God, and the pattern and example of God; and these three expressions set forth a choice perfection. A godly man may have his heart upright and perfect, even in the imperfection of his ways.



A man that is sincere is in God's account a perfect man ; sincerity is the truth of all grace, the highest pitch that is to be attained here. Sincerity of heart gives a man boldness, even in the presence of God, notwithstanding many failings. II. THE TESTIFICATION OF IT. How did he prove this perfection ? "I have kept myself from mine iniquity." He refers to some proper and peculiar evil and way of sinning that was his "special darling" ; a beloved sin. His care was to keep himself from it. A man cannot keep himself : the Lord is his keeper. But the Lord will have us co-operate with Him. When we perform anything, by His grace we do it. So we are said to "cleanse ourselves." The doctrine is this—even the best and dearest of God's people have some sins that they are more prone to than others, which may be called their own iniquity. What is a man's own iniquity ? In every man by nature sin doth reign, and a man is in just judgment given up unto the power of it. The reign of sin is double, virtual, due to original sin ; and actual, due to bias of will. Actual sin is that way of sin and death that a man chooseth to himself, he having looked abroad upon all the contentments of the world, his own corrupt inclination doth choose unto himself to follow with greatest sweetness, and contentment, and delight, as that wherein the happiness of his life consists. What is it for a man to keep himself from his iniquity ? 1. He takes care to keep the evil of that sin always in his eye, and to keep himself low in this consideration, that he hath been guilty of it in times past. 2. There is no sin that the heart of man is more perfectly against. The godly man hates that sin most, and breaks out against it with the greatest detestation, by which God hath been most dishonoured, and whereby his conscience hath been most enslaved in times past. 3. He is in this, above all other sins, most jealous of his heart ; he fears it in respect of every occasion, and opportunity, and temptation. 4. This sin he prays most against. 5. He turns the edge of the threatening against this sin. 6. He endeavours to grow up in the contrary grace, and strengthens it by all means. How doth this prove a sincere heart ? It shows a man to be truly affected by God's dishonour. It shows the truth of a man's self-denial, and his hatred against sin. It shows forth the sincerity of a man's love for God. How may a man know what his "darling sin" is ? It is that where a man's treasure is. It is what is most sweet to him ; what he favours most, and hides most. This sin makes all a man's lusts serviceable to it. It is the sin that most interrupts thee in holy duties. (*William Strong.*) **I kept myself from mine iniquity.**—*Kept from iniquity* :—I. A PERSONAL DANGER. "Mine iniquity." This is a dreadful possession to have in the house : a man had better have a cage of cobras than have an iniquity, yet we have each of us to deal at home with some special form of sin. Each man has his own way of sinning. It may take its speciality from our natural constitution. He who judges all men alike does them an injustice. Our tendency is to decry the particular form of sin that we find in others. It may be engendered by education. How impressive we are in childhood ! Certain forms of iniquity grow out of our particular condition. Each period of life has its own special snare. It is so with the condition of our life as to our outward circumstances. The rich man has his temptations, and the poor has his. Iniquities come through both prosperity and adversity. Iniquities surround us all in daily life. Your iniquity is likely to be that iniquity which thou hast oftenest fallen into in thy previous life. And that which you do not like to hear condemned is, very probably, your iniquity. II. A SPECIAL GUARD. "I kept myself from mine iniquity." 1. You must find out what it is. You must get a clear idea of your own iniquity. Endeavour to get a due sense of its foulness and guilt in the sight of God. Ask the Lord to make thee hate most that sin to which thou art most inclined. 2. Be resolved in the power of the Holy Spirit that this particular sin shall be overcome. There is nothing like hanging it up by the neck,—that very sin, I mean. The true path of safety is to pray and believe against all sin. We conquer sin by faith in Christ. III. A HAPPY RESULT. If we do keep from sin, what a blessing it will be to us. It will be a triumph of grace. It will be our best testimony to others. And what a sweet peace this will give to the conscience. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Resolute restraint* :—A noted characteristic of Mr. Cecil was his decision of character. It is said that he had studied for a painter, and after he had changed his object he retained a fondness and taste for the art. He was once called to visit a sick lady, in whose room there was a painting which so strongly attracted his attention that he found himself diverted from the sick person and absorbed by the painting. From that moment he formed the resolution of mortifying a taste which he found so intrusive and so obstructive to his nobler pursuits, and determined never again to

frequent the exhibition. *Our own iniquity*.—David comforts himself in his innocence and integrity, but ascribes that to God's restraining and assisting grace, which kept him back from that iniquity to which he was strongly tempted. What that particular sin was is not here mentioned. I. THERE IS SOME PARTICULAR SIN WHICH EACH ONE MAY CALL HIS OWN INIQUITY. What it is in each case is certainly known to God. And every man may know it himself, by communing with his own heart, and considering his ways; by laying his life to the rule of his conscience, and measuring his conscience by the rule of God's law. That there is greater proclivity in every one to some peculiar sins is sufficiently evident from every man's private conscience. 1. We are more inclinable to some sins than to others, through our natural tempers and complexions. The corruptible body presses down the soul. And such is the predominancy of some elements and humours, to which the naturalist ascribes the diversity of constitutions, that from thence also the moralist derives the different tempers of men's minds and inclinations. Thus the sanguine incline most to lust and wantonness, incontinence and intemperance; the choleric to anger and passion, pride and contention; the melancholic to envy, discontent, distrust, and despair; the phlegmatic to covetousness and idleness, and lukewarmness in religion. So that, according to the different constitutions of men's bodies, there arise different inclinations in their souls and minds; and as it is the proper business of reason to find out and restrain, so it is the great work of grace and religion to subdue and mortify the predominant passion. II. AT SOME CERTAIN PERIODS OF OUR LIVES WE ARE MORE INCLINABLE TO SOME SINS THAN OTHERS. Every age of human life has some peculiar darling that commonly bears the sway. In age, men are prone to such things as most conduce to their temporal advantage; they hoard up riches. In youth, men are prone to such things as most gratify their sensual appetites. III. WE ARE MORE INCLINABLE TO SOME SINS THAN OTHERS, BY REASON OF OUR EDUCATION OR OUR COMPANY. By these things men's minds and manners are as much, if not more, fashioned than by nature itself. IV. WE ARE PRONE TO SOME SINS THROUGH THE SEVERAL STATES AND CONDITIONS OF LIFE INTO WHICH PROVIDENCE BRINGS US. When we are healthy and strong we are apt to forget God. Sickness tempts us to be impatient towards Him. Prosperity makes men proud, and abundance insolent and wanton. Adversity tempts us to be envious and querulous, fraudulent and pilfering. There are more temptations to some sins than others, from the different professions or courses of life men take upon themselves. V. THERE ARE SOME PARTICULAR SINS TO WHICH MEN ARE LIABLE THROUGH RELIGION ITSELF. Many men's confidence of their own way is often attended with great censoriousness and uncharitableness towards all that differ from them. Observe that it is possible to keep ourselves from our own particular sins, as David did. This we may do by cherishing the grace that is freely given us of God, and remembering the vows we have so often made Him. What helps and directions are needful? 1. By constant and fervent prayer implore the Divine aid. 2. In vain may we expect God's help without our own diligent endeavours. 3. Take care to avoid such things and decline such occasions as are most likely to ensnare us. 4. Never think the evil of sin less than it is. 5. Be tender of violating your consciences. (*Henry Dove, D.D.*) *The Christian successful in conquering his besetting sins*.—I. EVERY MAN HAS ONE OR MORE PARTICULAR SINS TO WHICH HE, AS AN INDIVIDUAL, IS ESPECIALLY PRONE. The iniquity is emphatically his own. Varied and numerous, indeed, are the sins of the human heart, against which the Christian must guard; but every man has some particular sins which especially cleave to him (Heb. xii. 1), and David seems to allude to such. It would be well for us frequently to examine our own hearts for the express purpose of finding out our besetting sins. 1. There is usually a constitutional propensity to the sin. 2. The circumstances in which the individual is placed may favour the indulgence of the sin. How ill would it have been for Joseph, had he been of profligate nature, that he was placed in the house of Potiphar. 3. And Satan is particularly busy in furnishing temptations to the commission of the darling sin. He knows too well the evil propensities of the human heart, and, like a skilful angler, varies his baits to suit the tastes of his victims. When he saw pride working in the heart of David he provoked him to number Israel. II. EVERY GOOD MAN, CONSCIOUS THAT HE IS PRONE TO SOME PARTICULAR SINS, WILL DIRECT HIS PRINCIPAL EFFORTS AGAINST THEM. He is anxious to keep himself from his own iniquity. His efforts proceed on enlightened principles. The good man does not presume on his own strength; he devoutly prays for the assistance of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, he is

persuaded that vigorous efforts on his part are indispensable, in the order of means. True, no man, strictly speaking, can keep himself. David could not, he knew he could not; but he means that he had so exerted himself that God had given him success. How to secure this for ourselves I urge—1. The importance of acknowledging our individual sins when we come before God. Be not content with general confession. For sometimes, when the conscience prompts to minute confession, we restrain the impulse, through a secret misgiving that if cherished it would either prevent the gratification of our favourite lust, or at least augment our subsequent distress, by rendering us the more inexcusable in the indulgence of it. Guard against this delusion. Go and spread your case, with all its aggravations, before God, and cry for help against the darling sin. 2. The Christian makes it his especial business to mortify the sin: he is not satisfied with merely weakening its power; he aims at its destruction. 3. He forms strong resolutions against the sin. All the powers of his mind are in exercise; he deliberates and resolves to oppose his iniquity. His vows are recorded not on tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart. Aware of his own weakness, this is his determination—I will go forth against the sin in the strength of the Lord of hosts. 4. He carefully shuns everything which may facilitate the indulgence of the sin. Is intemperance the favourite propensity? In vain do former jovial companions invite him to partake of the intoxicating cup. The Christian will not go in the way of evil men. When unavoidably in circumstances of danger he is doubly on his guard. We are, at times, thus unavoidably placed in such positions. 5. The first risings of the sin he quickly and stoutly opposes. Nothing is more important than this. It is the part of wisdom to commence the attack, before the enemy has time to concentrate his forces. The smallest aperture in the embankment of a mighty river should be stopped, or it will increase, and the waters deluge the surrounding country, in spite of all resistance. The single spark must be extinguished, or a general conflagration may ensue. 6. The Christian furnishes his mind with cogent arguments, especially Scriptural ones, against his particular sins. If the prince of heathen philosophers could subdue his passionate temper by considerations derived from reason only, how much more may be expected from us who have reason and revelation both. Let the Psalmist teach us, who said, “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” 7. He will carefully cherish the opposite graces. The timid child we stimulate to acts of bravery, convinced that as these acts increase his timidity will decline. It is thus in the school of Christ; the more individual graces are cherished, the more their opposite vices will diminish. 8. He vigorously perseveres, till he has in a great measure gained his end. III. SUCCESS IN HIS EFFORTS THE GOOD MAN WILL EVER REGARD AS AN INVALUABLE BLESSING. He can scarcely find language sufficiently elevated to express his feelings. Oh, success in these efforts, what a blessing! 1. It is a signal victory: a powerful enemy is subdued. Would you estimate its power? How difficult victory was. How many have fallen in such conflict. 2. No other victory can equal it. He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city. 3. The results are glorious. For—(1) Other conflicts are rendered comparatively easy. The soldier who has stormed the strongly fortified castle has no difficulty in battering down the mud walls of a cottage; and the Christian who has subdued his reigning sin has a fair prospect of overcoming his other iniquities. (2) It affords the most decisive evidence of personal piety. How anxious the believer is to make his calling and election sure, and where is he to look for decisive evidence? But if he be successful in the subjection of reigning lusts, his conscience assures him this is the best evidence. (3) It enables the Christian to discharge the duties, and realise the privileges of religion, with greater spirit and delight. (4) It diffuses a sweet calm over the soul and imparts solid satisfaction. Suppose the reigning passion indulged, what evil consequences ensue. The gratification, too, is but momentary. Soon it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder. How delightful the feelings of David when Abigail kept him from shedding the blood of Nabal. (5) It is particularly pleasing to God, and will be honoured, not only now but hereafter, with the emphatic marks of the Divine approbation. Oh, ye in whose hearts sin reigns without opposition, beware lest iniquity be your ruin. Take refuge in the Lord Jesus. Pray for the Spirit of God. Christians, if the subject has been exemplified in your happy practice, be humble, be grateful, and give God the praise. If it has reproved and grieved you, remember it is designed to stimulate and profit you. Rely upon the Spirit of God, and fear not to say, “I will keep myself from mine iniquity.” (*Essex Remembrancer.*)



Vers. 25, 26. With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful.—*Poetic justice actual justice*:—What we call poetic justice pervades the whole Bible. We feel in the advancing civilisation that there is a reaching more and more to a realisation of this justice. In Job we have its full exemplification. There the latter end of the history of the man vindicates all. It is a dangerous teaching that some people try to wring out of the New Testament, that good people must not expect success in this world; that only the children of this world are wise in their generation, and can secure to themselves worldly prosperity. The opposite teaching is not near so dangerous, and not so wide of the truth, that all things will come out well in this life for those who do right. It does not always so turn out, but this is the tendency. We do not believe it is a good policy even in the material world to be bad. With the merciful God is merciful, and with the pure He is pure, and with the froward He is froward. Let us go beyond the physical world into the moral world. God is present with His world, governing it constantly. I do not believe that He is unknowable. He has wrought Himself in all His work, and is, of all powers, the most perpetually forced upon our attention. All science, all art, all of our studies are theological studies. Now, God reveals Himself as always on the side of right. In the moral world penalty follows wrong, and reward follows right with unflinching certainty. There is no confusion, there is no uncertainty in the moral world. Judgment is present everywhere. Of all scepticism, that is the most dangerous that questions the fundamental difference between right and wrong in their nature and tendencies. Plutarch speaks of the delay of judgment. There is no such delay. It comes, and comes at once. There are various elements that go to make up this penalty. Remorse, which is everywhere present in greater or less degree. Various social and civil penalties. The actual loss in our moral natures. Our idea of God is determined largely by our own character. The vision we have of God in the plain of the intellectual perception is a reflection of our own selves. The God of each man is different from the God of other men. As you are, so is your God. (*John W. Chadwick*.) *God's mercy among Christians*:—It is only in a rough sort of way at the best, as far as observation of individuals will carry us, that we see distinction made by Providence between the upright and the froward. But as no one knew better than the author of this Psalm, it is not to the fortunes of men, but to their whole experience as rational and spiritual beings, that we have to look in order to see how true it is that God shows Himself to every man according to what every man is. 1. In the first place, OUR LIFE IS EXPERIENCE OF GOD; for in Him most literally we live and move and have our being. If we find that this set of actions has one result and that set has another—this, as far as it goes, is a most authentic revelation to us of God. To say, therefore, that life is different to different men, above all as they differ in point of spiritual character, is to say that God shows Himself to them as so many different gods. To an honest man life is different from what it is to a rogue; different to a merciful man from what it is to a churl or a miser; different to a pure man from what it is to a sot or a debauchee. To take the illustration which is nearest at hand—David would have had a different experience from Saul whether he had or had not got Saul's place. The one man could be eminently happy with a shepherd's crook, and it mattered little to either so long as each was what he was in character. No two men could have had a more different experience in their lives; but the difference, such as it was, we can see, was in themselves—not made by their fortunes, but by their characters; not by the events of peace or war, but by the quality of mercy in the one case and of wilfulness in the other. Thus justice is done between man and man where justice is sure, and where it is perfect—in themselves. Many good people at the present time are haunted by an alarm which is altogether visionary. Look, they say, how many who live vicious lives know nothing of remorse! If there be no such thing as eternal punishment for the wicked, then there is no punishment; if there be no hell, there is no harm. But this is to take a very narrow view of human experience. There is much more remorse in people's hearts than they wear upon their sleeves. Many a smiling face, if you could get behind that mask, would show you grim enough features. At the same time, I grant readily that if remorse, so called, were all the difference between man and man on the score of character, the difference might seem to be trifling. It is the best and not the worst natures which know most of remorse. A good man falls into sin, and he knows what hell is. The wicked have no bands in their death. Consciences, which ought to burn, are seared; they should be live coals, and they are white cold ashes. I grant all this. But is there nothing besides remorse in question as between life and life? For

apart from remorse and everything like it, and in the nature of things, and everywhere and always, it is one thing to be upright and another to be wilful, it is one thing to be a kind man and another to be an unkind, one thing to be pure and another to be impure. The good of being good is in being so, and not in having no remorse; and the evil of being evil is in being so, and not in having remorse. Why will people so constantly forget this or overlook it? It is not that these different men have here and there, at odd moments, different or contrary experiences, but that the world in which each lives is a wholly different world. I know, for certain, that he who loves righteousness and truth and goodness would think that fate the cruellest of all possible which condemned him to be a rogue or a hypocrite. Thus, in the first place, because life is experience of God, to different men God is different. But I hasten now to remark that to different men—II. HE IS ALSO DIFFERENT AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY AND REFLECTION. On many other subjects, or rather on most, if people agree they do agree, and if they differ they differ, and there is an end of it. But it is different with regard to the highest object of human thought—God. People may agree, and do agree, in their language respecting Him, who have little or nothing in common in their thought and meaning. In point of fact, I venture to say, in the first place, among us, who all profess the same creed, there are Gods many and Lords many. Wesley, it is said, remonstrated with Whitfield as to his ideas of God, telling him, “your God is my devil.” And is it not obvious that something of the same sort might be said by sets of Christians at the present day to other sets? It is not what you read in sacred books, but the common notions of men that shape the common beliefs about God. Protestants do not believe in the God of the Romanist, nor he in heirs, though they have the same Bible and the same great articles of faith. To be condemned to think of God, as some men think of Him, and must think of Him, their life being stronger than their creed, not as a being to be loved, but as one to be feared or hated—this is punishment. If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness? If your religion is night, where is your day? If God is a bugbear, what is your life? What other gain, or reward, or happiness, on the other hand, would you desire than the religion of Christ—to love righteousness and truth and goodness with all your heart and soul and strength and mind, and to believe that God, who is over all, and is the Beginning and the End of all, is all that you love? What other reward, gain, happiness would you have than that? Christianity is a sorry gain, I admit, to many who profess it, except it be the only escape from the bottomless pit, and from the lake of fire and brimstone. It is a sorry gain to those, and they are many, whose notion is that something which God can give them, or some place in which He can put them, will be heaven. But that which makes God Himself our heaven is great gain, without reference to any life but this. With this a man might live and die, and doubt if he is to live again, and with his last breath bless God—the merciful man’s God, and his exceeding great reward. III. I have but to add, then, last of all, as THE PRACTICAL LESSON WHICH WE GET FROM ALL THIS—a man may change his Church and his creed and not change his God; but he changes his God when he changes his life. Let us, by trying to do the will of God in our daily life, learn of the truth whether it be of God. Otherwise we shall never learn it. (*J. Service.*) *The attitude of God towards good and bad men:*—Even as the sun, which unto eyes being sound and without disease is very pleasant and wholesome, but unto the same eyes, when they are feeble, sore, and weak, is very troublesome and hurtful, yet the sun is ever all one and the self same that was before; so God hath ever shown Himself benign and bountiful to those who are kind and tender-hearted towards His saints, and are merciful to those who show mercy. But unto the same men, when they fall into wickedness, and grow and are full of cruelty, the Lord sheweth Himself to be very wrathful and angry, and yet is one and the same immutable God from everlasting to everlasting. (*Robert Cawdray.*)

Ver. 28. *Thou wilt light my candle.*—*Lighted candles:*—In the East the poorest people burnt a lamp all through the night time, for they dreaded a dark house as a terrible calamity. When they had light they were happy, and in some degree prosperous. David says that God will light his home lamp for him, and will thus make his home happy for him. In Prov. xx. 27 we find this sentence, “The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord.” The question is, are we lighted candles? Away in the north there is a lighthouse that has no light at all in it; but yet it shines, because a light that burns upon the shore is reflected into the lantern far out at sea. All very well for the lantern, but it will not do for us; we must have

the light within ourselves. But we cannot light ourselves. Jesus must light up our souls by giving us His Spirit, and when He does this then we can give light to others and get more light from Him. If He does this for us we must continue burning. Jesus desires this, and also that we should burn properly. George Whitfield said he hoped he "should die blazing, and not go off as a snuff." And remember that our lighted candle may light another candle, and yet have as much light as it had before. God uses one soul to help and bless another soul. In the diary of Thomas Carlyle there was a sketch of a candle that burned as it wasted. Underneath Carlyle had written, "May I be wasted, so I be of use." (*J. J. Ellis.*)

*Lighting our candles at heaven's torch:*—That which makes a candle what it is is its adaptation to receive light, and by burning itself to transmit that light. God is the great Light of this universe, and we know not of how many universes besides. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." That is the one great central fact which keeps mankind from despair,—the assurance that at its heart the universe is not dark but bright; it is bright with wisdom, bright with power, and bright with love. It is man's supreme glory that he has this kinship with God. However dark his nature may have become through sin, it is of such a kind that it can be lighted from heaven's torch. There has never yet been discovered any man or any tribe of men who did not have this power or capacity to receive Divine illumination. Now, there is one thing to which I specially desire to call your attention, and that is that the candle, in order to receive the light from the match or the taper or the torch, must yield itself to the light. There is no way to shine except by burning ourselves. Though we were created as the candles of the Lord, we have the power to refuse to give our hearts up to be lighted by heaven's fire. Indeed, we may, if we are foolish and wicked enough to do it, lend our hearts to be lighted by the devil's fire, and give forth a baleful flame that will make the darkness deeper not only for ourselves, but for every one who is influenced by us. God will not forcibly take our candle and light it at the heavenly fire. We must yield it to His hands through our own decision. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*) **The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light.**—*Light out of darkness:*—David's deliverance from his enemies was the work of no human strength or skill, but of the unseen Master whom David served, and therefore he is so buoyant and hopeful as he looks forward to the future. The future had troubles in store for David,—troubles in his family, troubles with his subjects, and, worst of all, troubles that would come of his own misconduct. But be the future what it may, David can rest upon the moral certainty that he will still enjoy that illuminating and strengthening presence of which he has had experience in the past. This confidence in a light that will not fail in the dark hours of life is eminently Christian. There are three dark shadows which fall across every human life—the shadow of sin, the shadow of pain, and the shadow of death.

**I. THE SHADOW OF SIN.** Sin is the transgression in will or in fact of the eternal moral law. Sin itself is the contradiction of God, it is the repudiation of God, the perverse activity of the created will. Sin is not always an act: often it is a state; it is an attitude of the will, it is an atmosphere of mind and disposition; it pervades thought, it insinuates itself into the springs of resolve, it presides over life where there is no conscious or deliberate intention of welcoming it, it changes its form again and again. But throughout it is one in root and principle, the resistance of the created will to the will of God: and this resistance means darkness, not in the sky above our heads, but far worse—darkness in the moral nature, darkness in the moral intelligence, darkness at the centre of the soul. This darkness was felt in the degree possible to them by the heathen. It explains the vein of sadness which runs through the highest heathen literature. For us Christians the sin is blacker, and the shame is greater in proportion to our higher knowledge of God and His will. In order to escape from this dark shadow, men have tried to persuade themselves that sin is not what we know it to be, and the conscience which reveals it to us is only prejudice, or a bundle of prejudices accumulated through centuries of human life. But the shadow of sin cannot be conjured away; it lies thick and dark upon human life. Upon us, sitting as we are in the darkness of the region of the shadow of death, there shines the sun of God's pardoning love, and He, our Lord and God, in very deed makes our darkness to be light.

**II. THE SHADOW OF PAIN.** We know pain, not in itself, but by its presence, by its effects. The problem of pain is a distressing, almost overwhelming one. It is pain which dogs our steps from the cradle to the grave. It is not limited to man's bodily constitution; the mind is capable of sharper pain than any that can be caused by a diseased or wounded body. How to deal with pain; how



to alleviate it; how to do away with it—these have been questions which men have discussed for thousands of years. Pain, on the whole, remains inaccessible to human treatment, and especially does it resist attempts to ignore its bitterness. Pain in the world of men is the consequence of wrong-doing, but our Lord did no guile, and yet He was a sufferer. Man suffers more than the animals, the higher races of men suffer more than the lower. As the Man of Sorrows, our Lord showed that pain is not to be measured by the reasons for it which we can trace in nature; it has more and larger purposes, which we can only guess at, but as associated with resignation, love, sanctity, pain is most assuredly the harbinger of peace and joy. On the Cross its triumph was unique; it availed to take away the sin of the world.

III. THE SHADOW OF DEATH. The thought that death must come at last casts over thousands of lives a deep gloom. No real comfort is to be had by reflecting that the laws of nature are irresistible. The darkness of the grave is not less lightened by our Lord and Saviour than is the darkness of sin or the darkness of pain. He has entered the sphere of death, and with Christians death is no longer dark. That our Lord makes these three dark shadows to be light is the experience in all ages of thousands of Christians. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Vers. 29, 33, 34. *By Thee have I run through a troop.*—*Surmounting impossible difficulties*:—This is a poetical way of representing the fact that impossibilities have often been made possible in our own experience. Looking back upon certain combinations of circumstances, we cannot but feel that we were surrounded by great and high walls, and that troops of dangers thickened around us in deadly array. Now that we see ourselves in a "large place," we are tempted to believe that we are still in a dream, and that our liberty is a thing which we hold only in the uncertain light of a momentary vision. When our imagination is vexed by the cross colours which make up the panorama of life, it is easy to persuade us that to-morrow we shall be back again in chains, for we have enjoyed but an imaginary liberty. Then, under happier circumstances, we see how the miracle is a simple reality,—that we have in very deed escaped perils which at one time seemed to be insurmountable, and that our escape is due entirely to the exercise of the almightiness of God. It is remarkable how, under such circumstances, we unconsciously magnify our own importance in the universe. We do not mean to be ostentatious and proud when we declare that God has exerted Himself specially on our behalf, and has indeed Himself been disquieted until our comfort was restored and established. The Psalmist speaks here as if he were the sole object of the Lord's care, and as if the Infinite took delight only in his well-being and prosperity. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

*Energy put into a man*:—Sir Alexander Ball was one of those great men who adorned our navy at the end of the eighteenth century. The following anecdote is told of him by his friend the poet Coleridge. "In a large party at Malta I had observed a naval officer listening to Sir A. Ball with a mixed expression of awe and affection that gave a more than common interest to so manly a countenance. This officer afterwards told me that he considered himself indebted to Sir Alexander for that which was dearer to him than his life. 'When he was Lieutenant Ball,' said he, 'he was the officer I accompanied in my first boat expedition, being then a midshipman, and only in my fourteenth year. As we were rowing up to the vessel which we were to attack, amid a discharge of musketry, I was overpowered by fear, and seemed on the point of fainting away. Lieutenant Ball, who saw the condition I was in, placed himself close beside me, and still keeping his countenance directed towards the enemy, pressed my hand in the most friendly manner, and said in a low voice, 'Courage, my dear boy. You will recover in a minute or so. I was just the same when I first went out in this way.' 'Sir,' added the officer to me, 'it was just as if an angel had put a new soul into me. With the feeling I was not yet dishonoured, the whole burden of agony was removed; and from that moment I was as fearless and forward as the oldest of the boat's crew.'"

*One trophy for two exploits*:—What is true of David is true of David's Lord. The Holy Ghost has presented to us the experience of Jesus in that model of experience through which David passed. So the text tells both of Christ and the believer also. Let us speak of it. I. IN RELATION TO CHRIST. And 1. For the first sentence, "By Thee have I run through a troop." Christ's enemies were as a troop for number. Who can count them? But also for their discipline. They were marshalled under that skilful and crafty leader Satan, the arch-fiend and Prince of Darkness. And his servants are well trained. He came against Jesus with his army, in settled order. It was no wild rush of some Tartar host, but a well

arranged and well regulated attack. Never let us undervalue the strength of Christ's enemies. Now, this sentence has been read in varied ways, and each is very suggestive. One reads it, "By Thee have I run to a troop"; so that Jesus did not wait for the attack, but made it Himself. See how He went forth to meet Judas and the armed band on the night of the betrayal. But our version reads, "through a troop," and this is also accurate. For His victory was complete. They stood firm as if they would not flinch, they thought they had defeated Him; but His Cross was the very symbol of His omnipotence, for in weakness was He strong. See Him running through this troop. And how speedily. His sufferings were but short. What a stride was that which Jesus took when He marched right through His enemies, and laid them right and left slain before Him. There is yet another version, "By Thee have I run after a troop." As if he would say, "I met them, fought them, vanquished them, pursued them and captured them." "He led captivity captive." Note the words, "By Thee." He acted as the servant of God. But it is blessed to think that the Father as well as the Son, yea, the whole Trinity of sacred Persons, is engaged for our redemption. 2. The second sentence, "By my God have I leaped over a wall." David seems to be describing the capture of some fortress, such as Jebus, afterwards called Jerusalem. Now Satan had shut us all up in a mighty fortress. It had as one bulwark the strength of sin and the law; as another the suggestions of Satan to men's hearts; and then there was the deep ditch of men's sins, and the mound outside of Human Depravity. Now Christ comes, and He leaps over these walls. And He not only Himself surmounted these walls, but brought all His people on His shoulders, as Æneas carried off his old father Anchises. And all this also was "by my God." He acted as Mediator. Let our souls meditate much upon Christ's victories. II. TO THE BELIEVER. He has his troops of enemies and his imprisoning wall. But sometimes he makes the mistake of trying to climb over the troop when he should break through them, and of trying to break through the wall which he should climb over. Let him have courage for the troop to run through them, and discretion for the wall to climb over it. And by means of faith he can do this. Luther often used to defy Satan to battle. I care not to do that, but he used in his queer quaint way to say, "I often laugh at Satan, and there is nothing makes him so angry as when I attack him to his face, and tell him that through God I am more than a match for him, tell him to do his worst, and yet I will beat him; and tell him to put forth his fury, and yet I will overcome him." He that has made God his refuge need fear no storm. "Look," said a poor woman to a lady who called to see her, "Look, ma'am, I'll show you all I'm worth." And she showed her her cupboard with nothing in it but a dry crust; and a chest, but it was empty. "That is all I am worth, ma'am, but I have not a doubt or fear but that God will supply my need." Now that woman had learnt how to run through a troop and by her God to leap over a wall. What have you for your soul like that? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 30. As for God, His way is perfect.—*God's ministries*:—Many mythologies have told how the gods arm their champions, but the Psalmist reaches a loftier height than these. He ventures to think of God as doing the humble office of bracing on his girdle, but the girdle is itself strength. God, whose own "way is perfect," makes His servant's way in some measure like His own; and though, no doubt, the figure must be interpreted in a manner congruous with the context, as chiefly implying "perfection" in regard to the purpose in hand—namely, warfare—we need not miss the deeper truth, that God's soldiers are fitted for conflict by their "ways" being conformed to God's. This man's "strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure." Strength and swiftness are the two characteristics of antique heroes, and God's gift bestowed both on the Psalmist. Light of foot as a deer, and able to climb to the robber forts perched on crags as a chamois would, his hands deft, and his muscular arms strong to bend the bow which others could not use, he is the ideal of the warrior of old; and all these natural powers he again ascribes to God's gift. A goddess gave Achilles his wondrous shield, but what was it to that which God binds on this warrior's arm? As his girdle was strength, and not merely a means of strength, his shield is salvation, and not merely a means of safety. The fact that God purposes to save, and does act for saving, is the defence against all dangers and enemies. It is the same deep truth as the prophet expresses by making "salvation" the walls and bulwarks of the strong city where the righteous nation dwells in peace. God does not thus arm His servant and then send him out alone to fight as he can, but "Thy right hand holds

me up." What assailant can beat him down if that Hand is under his armpit to support him? The beautiful rendering of the Authorised Version, "Thy gentleness," scarcely conveys the meaning, and weakens the antithesis of the Psalmist's "greatness," which is brought out by translating "Thy lowliness," or even more boldly, "Thy humility." There is that in God which answers to the peculiarly human virtue of lowliness; and unless there were, man would remain small, and unclothed with God-given strength. The devout soul thrills with wonder at God's stooping love, which it discerns to be the foundation of all His gifts, and therefore of its blessedness. The Singer saw deep into the heart of God, and anticipated the great word of the one Revealer, "I am meek and lowly in heart." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*The perfection of providential dispensations*:—David had by this time followed the Lord through many a dark step, and he had endured various troubles. Now he is looking back and giving his verdict as to them all. There is—1. A magnificent preface—"As for God." He is standing up for God. 2. What of God he commends—"His way," whether it be that in which men walk with God, personal holiness, or the way wherein God walks with men—the way of His providence, His dispensations. 3. The commendation is perfect. Now, in illustration of text—I. To OUR CORRUPT EYES GOD'S WAY IS NOT ALWAYS PERFECT. Because—1. We cannot always see the reason of it (*Psa. lxxvii. 19*). The Lord leads man he knows not where. We have to wait to know (*Acts x. 17; John xiii. 6, 7*). 2. It sometimes seems to forget the promises. We are ready to cry, as in *Jer. xv. 18*, "Wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a liar?" Abraham went in to Hagar for this reason. 3. It sometimes goes cross to the promises, as when Abraham was commanded to offer up Isaac. See also *Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii. 1)*. The way in the wilderness is often crooked. 4. It runs at times seemingly quite contrary to the design of Providence. The Lord designs good, but disappointment after disappointment cross it more and more. Thus it was with Joseph when cast into the dungeon. Oftentimes Providence reads best backwards (*Deut. xxxii. 36*). Sometimes—5. It lays aside the most likely means (*1 Cor. i. 23, 24; 2 Kings v. 11; John xvi. 6, 7*). Sometimes—6. It falls on means quite contrary to its design. As when clay was used to cure the blind. When the Lord heals by wounding (*Rom. viii. 28*). Then—7. Providence smiles though wicked men get the sunny side of the brae and walk contrary to God. This made Asaph stammer (*Psa. lxxiii. 12-14*, and *Jer. xii. 1, 2*). But there is no fault in this (*Psa. xcii. 7*). See the end of all these things. 8. The good troubled (*Eccles. viii. 14*). Job. But *2 Cor. xii. 9, 10*. And—9. Great afflictions meeting the Lord's people in the way of duty. This often Jacob's case. 11. BUT GOD'S WAY IS PERFECT. It is according to the pattern shown in the Word. Is suited to our need (*Deut. xxxii. 4*). Is ever suited to the time. Is stable. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

*The Word of the Lord is tried.*—*The Bible tested and triumphant*:—Look at some of the severe tests to which the Bible has been subjected, and by successfully meeting which it has vindicated its claims to a Divine origin, and to universal human acceptance. I. THE BIBLE HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME. Since the Sacred Canon closed, how many and how vast are the changes which have gone on among men. Hardly one of the ancient powers is to-day extant. How great have been the strides of human progress! Yet the science of salvation, as taught in the Bible, has needed no remodelling. The race does not outgrow the religion of the Bible. Compare the case of the Bible with the poems of Homer. The two works are, in a certain sense, contemporaneous; critics have denied to the Bible any higher inspiration than that of human genius; and Greek poetry held among that ancient people very much the same place as did the sacred Scriptures among the Jews. Three thousand years ago the two works stood before the world on a comparative equality. How stands the case to-day? Homer is read as a model of epic verse and specimen of old Ionic Greek. The Bible is read everywhere as a transcript of the Eternal. II. THE TEST OF CRITICISM. Criticism, the most searching and severe to which any work has ever been subjected. A criticism often hostile. But the old Book has come out of it only purified. III. THE TEST OF PRACTICAL TRIAL. In the patent office are models of many beautiful machines that could not be worked. The Book will stand every practical test. It gives the solution of the great enigmas of the human soul, and provides the consolation for life's dark hours, those hours of disappointment, adversity, sorrow, and bereavement which come so surely to us all. (*B. B. Loomis, Ph.D.*)

*The Word of the Lord commended to our faith by its being a tried Word*:—A thing that has been tried is deemed all the more valuable on that account. A medicine which has been found on trial to be a sure remedy for certain kinds



of disease is held in high estimation. It is thus that the Word of the Lord is commended to our high esteem. It is a tried Word. I. SCIENCE HAS TRIED IT. For though at first it denied, now it does homage to the Word of God. For example—1. Geology. In its early development many facts were brought forward that seemed to bear hard on Scripture statements. Several years since the discovery was made, or was thought to be made, by perforating the successive lavas formed by the volcanic overflows of Mount Ætna, that the earth must have existed, in its present form, at least fourteen thousand years. The discovery was published by Brydone, an English traveller in Sicily, and flew like light through Europe, and was seized upon by multitudes as furnishing complete evidence that the chronology of the Bible is false and the Bible itself untrue. But subsequent investigation has proved that the supposed discovery was based on an entirely false view of facts. At a later period the astronomical tables of India were supposed to furnish incontestable proof of a much higher antiquity belonging to our globe than is assigned it according to the writings of Moses. But these same astronomical tables were afterwards examined by the great French philosopher Laplace, and were demonstrated to be of comparatively modern date, and furnish not the slightest evidence against the Mosaic chronology. In like manner the variety of languages, and the diversity of colour and form which distinguish the different races of men, have often been urged with great confidence as disproving the account given in Genesis of the common origin of mankind. But the study of ethnography, or the classification of nations by a comparison of their languages, together with a better acquaintance with the natural history of man, has removed this objection, and shown to the satisfaction of the most competent judges that the human race sprang from a common pair. It is with science as it is with the human mind in youth, it is apt to be self-conceited and sceptical; but in its maturity it becomes humble, modest, and reverent of God's Word. Hence, as Professor Hitchcock of Amherst College says in his *Religion of Geology*, "Every part of science which has been supposed, by the fears of friends or the malice of foes, to conflict with religion, has been found at length, when fully understood, to be in perfect harmony with its principles, and even to illustrate them." II. TIME HAS TRIED IT. It is with the Bible as it is with its Divine Author: "One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." III. FRIENDS HAVE TRIED IT. For they have been all made such by the transforming and subduing power of the Word itself. Consider their numbers, and what it has done for them, and the circumstances under which they have made trial of it and never found it fail. IV. ENEMIES HAVE TRIED IT: by persecution; by laws directed against it; by ridicule; by philosophy, and by every means left at their command. Still the object of all these attacks remains uninjured, while one army of its enemies after another has passed away in defeat and dishonour. Though it has been ridiculed more bitterly, misrepresented more grossly, opposed more rancorously, and burnt more frequently than any other book, or perhaps than all other books united, it is so far from sinking under the efforts of its enemies that it is plainly gathering fresh strength from age to age, and the probability of its surviving until the consummation of all things is now far greater than ever. V. IT HAS BEEN TRIED IN ITS INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER, upon society, and all the best interests of man. See what institutions it has founded for human good, and maintains them still. Hence learn—1. There is no fear for the future. As nature's answers are ever uniform and constant and true, so are those of the Word of the Lord. 2. It is a serious matter for any one to set himself against it. Voltaire said, "It has been the boast of ages that twelve men established Christianity in the world. I will show the world that one man can destroy it." But where is Voltaire, or what did he accomplish of his impious boast? He lived long, and he worked hard and went down to the grave, cursing the horrid work in which he had spent his days. 3. Let us all prepare to meet the scenes which it tells us are yet before us: death, judgment, eternity. Prepare to meet your God, prepare, through His mercy in Christ, to meet Him in peace. For the time is at hand when all that He has said in His Word of the righteous and the wicked, and of heaven and hell, will be matter of experience, of personal unchanging experience to us all. (*Joel Hawes, D.D.*)

Ver. 34. He teacheth my hands to war.—*Divine endowment for service*:—God raises up men specially qualified to meet the exigencies of human society—the soldier, the statesman, the law-giver, the teacher of religion, the ready writer, the eloquent man, and the cunning artificer. He had need of a soldier to accomplish

the purposes of His will, and He qualified David for the work, and so long as David prosecuted his wars, free of ambitious and malevolent feelings, and solely with the desire of accomplishing the will of God, he served God as acceptably in the field as he could have served Him in His temple. Provided his cause be just, and he prosecute it with right motives, the patriot soldier is engaged on as holy a work as the priest at the altar. God so taught David the art of war that "a bow of steel was broken by his arms." It required the use of both hands and feet to bend the ancient bow of steel; how great, then, must David's strength have been to break it with his arms. This verse has, of course, a spiritual application, showing how easily God can clothe with overcoming might all who are engaged in the good fight of faith, enabling them to overcome, with a moiety of their strength, the strongest weapons with which they may be assailed. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*)

Ver. 35. **Thy gentleness hath made me great.**—*The gentleness of God*:—When the coarse mind of sin makes up gods by its own natural light, those gods reveal the coarseness and the sin together. The God of revelation contrives to be a gentle being; hiding His power that He might put confidence and courage in the feelings of His children. I. **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY GENTLENESS?** God's gentleness lies in His consenting to the use of indirection, as a way of gaining His adversaries. Instead of coming down upon man in a manner of direct onset, to carry His submission by storm, He gently lays siege to him, waiting for his willing consent. It is the very genius of Christianity itself to bring men to obedience by a course of loving indirection from what is revealed in that wondrous indirection of grace, the incarnate life and death of Jesus. But where is the gentleness of God in those inexorable forces of the external world? Is it such a God that moves by indirection? Yes, and all the more properly, because these terrible forces permit Him to do it. He can hide His omnipotence—can set His will behind His love for a time, because He has these majestic inexorabilities for the rear-guard of His mercies. II. **THE END GOD HAS IN VIEW IN CONDESCENDING TO THESE GRACIOUS METHODS,**—TO MAKE US GREAT. The Christian Gospel is a plan to bring down the loftiness of our pride and the wilfulness of our rebellion, but to make us loftier in capacity and power and personal majesty. This is true of our will and of our intellect. Then, how perverse are those who require God to convert them by force. Let us adjust our conceptions of the true scale of a Christian man by God's careful respect for our liberty, the detentions of His violated feeling, the sending of His Son, and the silent intercession of His Spirit. Be it ours to live with a sense of our high calling upon us. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) *The Divine gentleness*:—The idea here is, goodness manifested in gentle dealings, in loving-kindness and tender mercy—an exhibition of the goodness of God which had often awakened his heart's warmest gratitude and led him to ascribe praise to Jehovah. The idea of lowliness enters into the meaning of the word gentleness; it is indeed essential to it. Gentleness is put in contrast with greatness. There is first God stooping down to that which is lowly, and as the result of this, His condescension, we have the gentle tender rule of His loving administration. I. **THE GENTLENESS OF OUR FATHER'S RULE.** It was due to the Father's gentleness—1. That we were brought under His genial sway. 2. That we have been kept in the school of Christ. There He conquers our dulness and wilfulness by His gentleness. 3. The gentleness of the Divine rule is revealed to us in the experience of life. Illustrate from our days of sin, days of punishment, days of affliction, days of weariness, and the hour of death. II. **THE EFFECTS WHICH THIS GENIAL SWAY PRODUCES IN US.** Sept. reads, "Thy discipline." The Chaldee paraphrase reads, "Thy word hath increased me." There are some Christians of whom you feel that their humility—so beautiful and sincere and unpretending and unobtrusive—is an honour to them. Do you know the secret of this their greatness? It is the product of Divine culture. We know some Christians whose zeal for God and God's house is such that they are made honourable by it. It is because the Divine gentleness has been so sweetly realised as to create a passionate desire to make some expression of its gratitude. Saviour Divine! may Thy gentleness make us gentle—gentle in thought, in intent, in speech, in action,—that we may live gentle lives of loving devotedness to the God whose discipline and leadings are ever tender and kind! (*Edward Leach.*) *God's gentleness our greatness*:—It is remarkable that the Psalmist should speak of God as gentle, and of himself as great, and that he should ascribe his own greatness to God's gentleness, as the effect to the cause. This would appear to reverse the natural order of things. The greatness of God might well teach us a lesson of gentleness. I. **THE IMPORT OF THAT GENTLE-**

NESS WHICH IS ASCRIBED TO GOD. Contrast it with His infinite power and universal sovereignty. There is united in the Divine character surpassing gentleness and transcendent greatness. To what but the Lord's gentleness, forbearance, long-suffering, and tender mercy is it owing that our rebellious and guilty race have been so long spared and so graciously dealt with? But it is in the person of His well-beloved Son, the meek and lowly Saviour, that the gentleness of God is exhibited to us in a visible and palpable form. Was not the Spirit of Christ emphatically one of gentleness? Did not that lovely Spirit, so aptly typified by the similitude of a dove, characterise His every word and action? Such a combination of gentleness with fortitude; of meekness with dignity; of the tenderest love with the most inflexible firmness, belongs only to Immanuel. The delineation of the character is far above human power.

II. THE NATURE OF THE GREATNESS WHICH THE PSALMIST AFFIRMS TO BE THE EFFECT OF THE DIVINE GENTLENESS. Is it the grandeur of wealth, power, fame, or royal dignity to which he refers? His own testimony negatives the supposition. It is of moral greatness, as distinct from earthly grandeur,—greatness of principle, of soul, of destiny—that greatness which teaches man to condemn sensual indulgences, that greatness which consists in spiritual endowments, and heavenly relationships—this is the only greatness which really dignifies and ennobles a never-dying spirit. This true spiritual greatness is at once the evidence and the effect of a Divine nature. To such heavenly greatness God's gentleness would lead us by Christ Jesus. The one subject of our everlasting songs will be, the gentleness of God in Christ. (*W. F. Vance, M.A.*)

*The genesis of greatness*:—Hengstenberg calls this Psalm the great hallelujah of David's life, and one with which he retires from the theatre of action. David was at his best when he wrote these words. There were times when he was not fitted to pen such an ode.

I. THE CHARACTER OF TRUE GREATNESS. The world has admired and even deified the human earthward side of greatness, and overlooked the spiritual, Godward side. Men have exalted power, wealth, intellectual superiority above character or moral greatness, founded in faith, purity, and trust in God. Since the religion of Jesus Christ has prevailed, men are beginning to put character in the light of His matchless Excellence. How far like Him is any admired character? It is a cheerful sign that Christian communities demand some degree of moral greatness in those called to posts of power. The greatest nations of the globe are Christian. The most influential statesmen are reverent in their attitude, if not professedly converted men. True greatness is moral goodness.

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS TRUE GREATNESS. David is here reviewing his life. He is getting at the force that wrought in all these years and led him safely on and up, that has developed an inward life as well as an outward opulence and power. It is God. "Thy gentleness hath made me great." This word "gentleness" is translated condescension or benignity. It is gracious kindness to one's inferior. The sun pours its fervid rays on the earth, kissing its flowers and fruits into beauty, and ripening its bounty year by year. So the face of God, like Divine sunshine, calls out of you and me all that is good and really great. We realise this fact as we muse on the Divine love, so unwearied and continuous through our lives. Let us all strive to realise that God's eye of love rests on us. He sees our joy and grief, our loss and gain, our sin and our sorrow. Let us ever keep the windows of our life open to Him. God's benignant grace makes us truly great. (*George E. Reed, D.D.*)

*The gentleness of God, and our greatness*:—The gentleness of God—it is a wonderful word: a word that never could have originated with man. There are gods of might, grim and terrible. Man has never invented a god of gentleness. Jove is but a hurler of thunderbolts. Unto us our God hath revealed Himself, and lo, He is our Father, Almighty and Everlasting, yet His chosen emblem is the Breath, the Dew, the Lamb, the Dove,—all that sets forth the gentleness of our God. How best may we get hold of this wondrous truth? Gentleness is many sided. The word is rendered condescension, goodness, patience—but gentleness is more than these, or less. With us it may be but a lack of energy, a lack of decision. What passes for gentleness may be only a colourless mixture of weakness and unconcern, a forbearance that amiably smiles at everything and everybody, because it is less trouble than doing anything else. But it is difficult to think of gentleness in an intense nature. How can such an one be gentle? It is David, the valiant champion and captain of Israel, brave, heroic, chivalrous David, the man, too, of fierce passions, who gives us this experience. He knew as well as any the power and majesty of the Most High. And yet as he looks back upon his life he sees that the greatness of it has grown up out of the gentleness of God. We see the gentleness of God bearing in this



brave soldier its own fruit, making him gracious and gentle ; and at such times it is that he rises to his highest greatness. For myself I think I get furthest into the heart of this truth when I think of gentleness as the grace of one who puts himself in our place, making himself so one with us that he understands how we feel, taking our weakness and our difficulty and doubt and fear as his own. God is our father and mother too—setting ever before Himself the loftiest purpose concerning us, yet ever seeing our weakness, feeling it, and stooping tenderly to help us. That is the gentleness of God. If I am to think of God as the sublime, the majestic only, what hope have I ? What allowance can be made for weakness, for ignorance, for peculiar difficulties ? But if the infinite love and gentleness of God do bring Him down to be one with me in my very flesh and blood, one with me in all the round of daily life and circumstance, then I may set out with confidence. If He understand me in all my peculiarities and needs, and be ever ready to help me, then may I triumph—His gentleness shall make me great. This perfect understanding of us away by ourselves, and this perfect sympathy with us, this separate love and separate help, is the very strength and sweetness of the Gospel of Christ. God is not consumed, as some have thought, with an incessant craving for His own glory. God is consumed with an incessant longing for the welfare and blessedness of His children. All things are set and perfectly adjusted to this end. You to whom the beginnings of the life of God are a perplexity, goodness is a despair—He calls you to Himself that His gentleness may make you great. His purposes concerning us are altogether too great to be won by force ; they can only be fulfilled by His gentleness. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *The gentleness of God, and the moral greatness of man.*—I. THE GENTLENESS OF GOD. 1. Not a quality men usually ascribe to God. The sense of sin is the prime cause of the dread of God. 2. Not a single, but a complex attribute. Its base is goodness. Its aspects and operations are manifold. It is always sympathetic, but it is not mere softness. It does not exclude severity when severity is demanded. God both hurls the thunderbolt and distils the dew.

II. THE EFFECT OF GOD'S GENTLENESS ON THE MORAL GREATNESS OF MAN. The faculties of man are great, his destiny is great, and the Gospel of his salvation is great. The character and conduct of man are often little, very little indeed ; but the powers and possibilities of his nature cannot be trivial. The Divine gentleness seen in—1. Convincing of sin. 2. Prompting to a better life. 3. Upholding the saint in his progress toward perfection. The after-life of the believing man on earth needs the ministry of God's gentleness. In the fight with evil within, the soul not infrequently grows sick of itself, weary of its own infirmities, and loses all heart about its own predicted victories. In such hours the experience of God's great patience with us, when we have given up all patience with ourselves, is of priceless value. III. CONCLUSION. 1. Other attributes besides the gentleness of God must contribute to the moral life and welfare of the soul. Rigour and tenderness are both requisite to the moral guidance and training of our race. 2. In the moral development and perfection of fallen men the gentleness of God discharges the highest function. The strong hand retains, the hand of gentleness elicits and fosters. Authority moulds from without ; love inspires from within. 3. The aim of the moral activity of God in this planet is to ensure the moral greatness of man. 4. Let none fail to weigh the condemning power of God's gentleness. The sufficiency of any moral force to encourage, inspire, and exalt is the exact measure of its ability to condemn. (*H. Batchelor, B.A.*) *Great lives.*—Gentleness is love in action.

Geologists tell us that the silent influences of the atmosphere are far more powerful than the noisy forces of nature : quiet sunshine than thunder, and gentle rain than earthquake. So the gentleness of God is His grandest excellence. His gentleness shows itself in the goodness which teaches us to know Him and inspires us to become like Him ; in the mercy which, remembering that we are but dust, forgives our sins and blots out the record of our iniquity. The spirit of the New Testament reveals the gentleness of God as manifested in the life of our Saviour ; for gentleness was the prevailing disposition of Jesus. Jesus was gentle in all His words, and meek in all His actions. In His disposition you have a picture of the spirit of the Almighty God. And His object is ever to make us truly great. I. THE GENTLENESS OF GOD IN THE INSPIRATION OF HIS LOVE. Love is the strongest force we know. Impelled by it, the wife has not feared to suck the poison from the wound of her husband, and love has ever been willing to lay down its life to save its beloved. Love is refining and elevating in proportion to its purity and power. Even the love of a dog makes a bad man better than he otherwise would be. There is a hunger for love in the human heart. The prisoner for life is the better for the love of the rat who creeps about his

dungeon. One of the worst characters portrayed by Charles Dickens is that of Bill Sykes—a creature apparently without natural affection—yet even he had a soft place in his heart, and was moved with pity when trying to drown his faithful dog. The most helpless being in this world is a new-born child; and it is this very helplessness that appeals so strongly to our love. But when you realise that you are loved of God, it makes you great in noble deeds. Love calls forth love. God's gentleness is known by its record in the Bible and by its inspiration in our hearts. And so the New Testament tells me of a fact—that in the heart of God there is love for me. But what should be the result when we know that our Saviour laid down His sacred life for us? Surely, that love, when it is felt in our heart, shall make the feeblest man great. II. NOTICE HIS GENTLENESS IN THE PLEADING OF HIS SPIRIT WITH EVERY MAN. The Holy Spirit pleads with every man; and we are taught not to grieve God by resisting that hallowed influence. III. THE GENTLENESS OF GOD IN GIVING US THE POWER OF THE RISEN LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. May God make us great—1. In our friendship to one another. 2. In our obedience to God. 3. In our actions. 4. In bearing our trials. You are one of God's jewels. But the polishing on the wheel must be if it is to shine brilliantly. 5. In our homes. Let us put away our littleness of character, and our feebleness in charity, and all that makes us mean and unlovely. We should be great in action as in thought. It is far more noble to be great than to be a king. Be great because God in His gentleness intends to lead you to paradise to be kings and priests. Let your actions be worthy of your high destiny; and may the gentleness of God uplift you from sin, and make you His children, whose lives shall adorn the Gospel of our Saviour. (*W. Birch.*) *The Divine gentleness:*—Whatever may have been the special link of association in the Psalmist's mind between the dignity to which he had himself been raised and the condescension of the Most High, the text naturally suggests to our own minds the connection subsisting between the gentleness of God and the true greatness of man. I. CONSIDER THE FACT OF THE DIVINE GENTLENESS. Gentleness is more than kindness. A man may be benevolent, and yet rude. He may do much good to others, and yet his well-doing may lack tenderness, and even his condescension may be a phase of his pride. But when we speak of the "gentleness" of any man or woman we speak of a quality into which enter the elements of humility, sympathy, simplicity, delicacy of feeling, calmness of spirit, patience, and long-suffering. It is a quality which eludes definition. It is to be felt rather than described. Gentleness is, so to speak, an "expression" on the face of love, the power of which may be realised in a moment, but the characteristics of which can with difficulty be transferred to the canvas. Now, when we speak of the gentleness of God we speak primarily of a quality in the Divine nature, made known to us, as it could only be, by its manifestations, by the revelation of an actual feeling in the Divine heart. We know how the gentleness of the human heart expresses itself,—in smiles which steal their way into the soul as the sunbeams steal into forest nooks; in tones which fall upon the ear as dew upon the grass, or as "snowflake upon snowflake." And so, when we find in God's works and ways the characteristics of lowliness and tenderness, we ought not merely to say that God acts as if He were gentle, but we ought to trace these characteristics upwards to an actual quality in the Divine nature. Carrying, then, this principle with us, let us look at some of the modes in which the Divine gentleness is revealed. And—1. The very language which I have just been using about the sunlight, the dew, the summer breeze, may suggest to us that God manifests His gentleness in the minutest forms and quieter aspects of nature. Creation reveals God: His wisdom, power, glory, but also, to some extent, His character. Not all things in nature thus reveal His character, but most do. We have in nature that which tells of what is grand and awful in Him. The vast mountains, with their wintry summits hidden in snow and mist; the ocean, lashed into fury by the tempest which strews upon its waters the wrecks of human industry; the earthquake and volcano, the thunder-roar and lightning-flash:—these are manifestations of a majesty which is almighty to create or to destroy. But when, on the other hand, we walk out into the fields on some fresh spring morning, and see the buds opening in the hedgerows; or when, on the quiet summer eve, we stroll by some streamlet and hear the birds sing among the leaves which are gleaming in the sunset, then God seems nearer to us than in thunder-roar or ocean tempest. Nearer to us, because the nearness is one which we can more easily bear—not of majestic power, but of quiet gentleness. How this gentle presence steals into our hearts amid the flowers. Yes; even if there were

nothing else to testify to the gentleness of God, the flowers would bear their silent witness. Mere power could manifest itself in ten thousand other and grander ways. What must be the nature of Him who finds a delight in thus clothing the earth with beauty? Pluck one of the daisies at your feet, and think—the great God who made the worlds has made this little flower to grow! Must not He Himself, then, be gentle and lowly, even as He is mighty? “A fevered child hushed to sleep by its mother”: look at that picture for a moment. 2. Another mode in which the Divine gentleness is revealed—namely, in the creation and maintenance of human affection. It is God who is the Inspirer of that love within the mother’s heart. He it is who has constituted those relations which bind us to one another, and which tend to elicit the deepest and tenderest affection. And has not man been created in the Divine image? Would he have been constituted with these capacities of affection unless his Maker delighted in beholding their exercise? How near God draws to us in the gentle courtesies of home and friendship: more near than even in the quiet scenes of nature. How often does some daughter within a household become, through her loving ways, as “a smile of God” to her parents; and the cradle of a sleeping infant, as another “Bethel” to the grateful mother, a very “gate of heaven” to her soul, giving her new glimpses of the presence and tenderness of God. Yes, “out of the mouth even of babes and sucklings God,” &c. And in friendship too, with its tender ministries and patient loving help—how this tells of the Divine sympathy, and of Him who “healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” There could be no tenderness at all in us, if its archetype were not first in Him. 3. God has also manifested His gentleness in the gift and Person of His Son Jesus Christ. Here, indeed, the revelation of the Divine humility reaches its climax. We cannot kneel in imagination before the manger of Bethlehem without feeling how real is the lowliness of God. The incarnation of the Divine Son was itself a humiliation. And this incarnation, remember, was the answer of the Creator to the sin of His creatures. Men were forgetting and forsaking Him, and trampling His laws under their feet. And all this enmity of theirs He meets—not with another deluge, not with fire and brimstone from heaven; but with the gift of the only-begotten Son, to take upon Him their nature, that the Divine Life might thus be inwrought, as it were, into the very texture of humanity, and that the world might be saved. Oh, what patient humility is here! How gently did the great God thus steal into the midst of the human family in the form of this Bethlehem Child. And how all through His life on earth does He show the same lowly gentleness. I might speak to you of other modes in which God manifests His gentleness. I might remind you how tenderly He often deals with us in His providence—erecting barriers of circumstance which help to keep us in the path of safety; mingling mercy also even with His chastisements; laying a gentle hand on the wound which must be probed, and sweetening the bitterness of the cup which must be drunk. Think, too, of the gentleness implied in the gift of the Holy Spirit the Comforter, who wrestles with us when we are tempted to sin, rebukes our transgressions in deep whispers within the soul, and gives us peace and consolation by His own indwelling presence. II. THE EFFECT OF THE DIVINE GENTLENESS UPON OURSELVES. It “makes us great.” It enlarges our being: helps us to the attainment of noble spiritual character. And He does this—1. By raising our estimate of our own nature. So long as we think only of the greatness of God and of His holiness, our own weakness and sin make us feel almost as if our existence were a worthless thing. But when God draws near to us in His gentleness, and calls us His “children,” then we begin to be conscious of the dignity of our being. 2. The gentleness of God “makes us great” by inspiring us with faith in Himself. Humility, not pride, is the godlike attribute; and faith in God is the root of all the highest creature greatness. For it is the key to self-conquest; and “he who ruleth his own spirit is,” &c. What has not faith done in and by those who have been inspired with its might? (Heb. xi.) Now, as faith is the secret of all this higher spiritual greatness, so the gentleness of God is the secret of this faith. We could not look up to God with a childlike confidence if He were merely in our thoughts “the Thunderer of Olympus.” But, being lowly and gracious in His own nature, He so manifests His fatherly gentleness as to win our trust. And thus the Divine gentleness “makes us great,” by awakening within us that faith which is the root of greatness. 3. The gentleness of God “makes us great,” by inducing the development of all our highest capacities. It has been remarked that civilisation has proceeded with more rapid strides and has reached a higher stage on the broader plains of earth, amid the tamer and quieter aspects of nature, than in the neighbour-



hood of the loftiest mountains and the grander features of our world. See the contrast between the populations of India or South America and those that cover the plains of Europe. The theory is that, in presence of the more sublime phenomena of nature, the spirit of man is awed and crushed, so that his development is cramped and fettered; whereas, on the broader plains of the world, his spirit becomes freer, and he learns to master the forces of nature, instead of cringing before her like a slave. But, however this may be, we know from our own experience that men who are greater, wiser, nobler than ourselves, help us in proportion as they stoop to us and identify themselves with us. To be met with gentleness is to be mightily helped, if it be only the gentleness of a strength which we respect. And thus it is that the Divine gentleness induces the development of our noblest powers. So long as we think only of the majesty of God there is danger lest terror paralyse our souls. But it is far otherwise when we realise the Divine lowliness—when we feel that God is drawing near to us in tender sympathy, and encouraging us, as “dear children,” to do our best for Him. Then our reverence for His greatness only makes our gratitude for His condescension the more intense; and this gratitude is a stimulus to all holy energy. Our meditation suggests two practical lessons—(1) Learn how you may yourselves become greater. Your whole being will shrivel if you worship a colossal fate or an almighty spectre. The devotees of mere power grow weak. Let awe and trust blend themselves in your souls. (2) Learn how you may help others to become greater. Treat them with gentleness, not with a weak softness—that will only enervate. Cultivate robustness of character. But see to it that you cultivate gentleness also. Has some poor ship dashed itself on the rocky coast, and would you save the crew with that strong thick rope of yours? Then attach to it the slender cord, and throw them that; that may bring them the strong rope, which will prove the means of their deliverance. Would you save men from a spiritual shipwreck? Would you strengthen souls in the hour of temptation? Then the stronger your own character is, the better; but let your strength avail itself of gentleness, and it will become the mightier to protect and redeem. Would you make men wiser? Then the wiser you yourselves are, the better; but your wisdom must in gentleness stoop to their ignorance, if you would educate and instruct them. Would you make men purer? Then the purer your own heart is, the better; but your purity must in gentleness bear pityingly and patiently with them, if you would arouse them to a truer self-respect, and lead them into a higher and holier life. It is the gentleness of greatness that makes men great. (*T. Campbell Finlayson.*)

*The power of God's gentleness:*—No one can glance, even in the most hasty manner, over this Divine song without observing the recognition of God's hand in all things by which it is pervaded. I. And at the very outset we find rising out of these words the question, WHAT IS THAT GREATNESS WHICH IN THE CHRISTIAN IS PRODUCED BY GOD'S GENTLENESS? Scarcely two individuals have the same idea of greatness. All, indeed, will agree that it denotes pre-eminence, but each will have his own preference as to the department in which that is to be manifested. Some associate it with the deeds of the warrior on the battlefield, others with the triumphs of the orator, or the achievements of the artist, the poet, the philosopher, the man of science; others, with the acquisition of rank or wealth or power. But the greatness which God's gentleness produces may co-exist with many of these, but is independent of them all. For man is great in the proportion that he resembles the holy God who made him. Man's greatness, therefore, is greatness in holiness. It is a moral thing, for the truest manliness and the highest God-likeness are convertible terms. Behold our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there any one who imagines that His greatness was lessened by the fact that He laboured at the carpenter's bench and was one of the poorest of the people? Not among warriors, poets, artists, statesmen, or the like do we name Him; yet even in the estimation of those who deny His deity, He is regarded as the greatest of men. Why? Because of His pre-eminence in holiness. Now, true greatness in man is precisely what it was in Him who, because He was the God-man, was the archetypal man. It is moral excellence, the greatness of character, pre-eminence in holiness, and is such that no external meanness can obscure its radiance, and no blaze of earthly glory can outshine its brightness. Thus, whatever our outward sphere may be, to be truly great we must have an inward character of holiness manifesting itself in all our actions; and he will be the greatest who, wherever he may be, is likest Christ. Some years ago a poor Spanish sailor was brought into a Liverpool hospital to die, and, after he had breathed his last, there was found upon his breast tattooed, after the manner of his class, a representation of Christ upon the Cross. You call that

superstition, and perhaps you are right; yet there was beauty in it too, for if we could have in our hearts what that poor seaman had painfully, and with the needle point, punctured over his, we should be great indeed. Is not this, in truth, the open secret of Paul's pre-eminence? for he thus describes himself: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our body." The manifestation of the life of Jesus: that is greatness, and to get that we must bear about in the body "the dying of the Lord." II. BUT HOW DOES GOD'S GENTLENESS MAKE US GREAT? 1. It is because the human heart is always more deeply affected by tenderness than sternness. See this in the reformation of criminals. If you attempt to drag a man by force his nature is to resist you; but if you attempt to attract him by love, it is equally in his nature to follow you. And this is the principle of the Cross of Christ. God might have left us justly to our sins; but He would make us great, and therefore Christ died. It is this which turns the heart to God as Sinai could never do. But the manifestation of this love attracts: in other words, His gentleness produces in me that love to Him which is the source and inspiration of holiness. But, passing from the general to the particular, you may see the words of the text verified in the manner in which God receives individuals into His love, and so begins in them the greatness of holiness. "The bruised reed He does not break; the smoking flax He does not quench"; and there is no one here whom He will not willingly and lovingly receive. Read those gentle and beneficent words which fell so frequently from His lips. Peruse such parables as that of the lost sheep, or that of the prodigal son. Ah! who can tell how many have been encouraged to go to Him by such declarations and invitations as these? And now, as they revert to the first faint stirrings of the new life in them which these words evoked, they can say with truth, "Thy gentleness hath made us great." 2. See this also in the manner in which God in Christ Jesus trains His people after they have come to Him. He does not leave them to themselves. He teaches them yet more and more of His grace; yet, in truest tenderness, He teaches them as they are able to bear it. 3. And in His dealings with His people now. Terrible are, at times, their trials, but "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of His east wind," and if the thorn of trial be not extracted, there comes the precious assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness." The subject has a twofold application. It presents Jehovah to the sinner in a very affectionate attitude. Think of it, my friend. God is tender toward you. How often you have provoked Him with your iniquities, your ingratitude, your procrastination! Yet He has not cut you down. You are living evidences of His gentleness. Finally, this subject shows the Christian how he should seek to bring others to the knowledge of Jesus. The gentleness of God should be repeated and reproduced in us, and we should deal with others with the same tenderness and affection as God hath dealt with us. Parents, seek the greatness of your children, that is their godliness, not by rigorous, unbending sternness, but in tender forbearance. You have heard of the mother who, as she was sitting on the brow of a hill, suffered her child unnoticed to wander from her side, until he stood upon the very edge of the beetling cliff. She was appalled when she discovered where he was, but her maternal instinct would not let her shriek. All she did was to open her arms and beckon him to her embrace, and the little fellow, unconscious of the danger in which he stood, ran to be folded to her bosom. So let it be with you. When you see your young people standing on some precipice of temptation, do not scold or blame or cry out about it; that will only push them over. Rather open to them the arms of your affection. Make home to them more attractive than aught else. Let your fatherhood and motherhood become more to them than ever, and by your very gentleness you will make them great. Sabbath-school teacher, this text speaks to you, and bids you, in your earnest efforts for your scholars' welfare, show to them the same gentleness that Jesus manifested when He took the children in His arms and blessed them. Do not lose your temper with them, but be gentle with them, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (*W. N. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 36. *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.—The double blessing of enlargement and safety.*—A smooth pathway leading to spacious possessions and camping-grounds had been opened for him. Instead of threading the narrow mountain path, and hiding in the cracks and corners of caverns, he was able to traverse the plains and dwell under his own vine and fig tree. It is no small mercy to be brought into full Christian liberty and enlarge-

ment, but it is a greater favour still to be enabled to walk worthily in such liberty, not being permitted to slip with our feet. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 46. **The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.**—*The Rock of salvation*:—True religion has nothing in it cloudy, melancholy, depressing. It is in itself full of fire, love, light, warmth. Our sadness arises from our sin and sorrow, but in God there is that to fill us with joy. Now here we have—I. A LIVING LORD. It is a living Christ that sheds a glory around Calvary, and around the tomb in which His body was laid. What would be our grief if He were not living? II. A SOLID ROCK. Christ will build His Church thereon. And it is a rock for refuge. III. ITS EXALTATION. He is exalted by the Father; and in the Bible; and in the contrite believing heart; and in the life and purpose of all His people. Let us build on this Rock. (*George Merrell.*)

Ver. 49. **Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee among the heathen.**—*David's deliverance and thanksgiving*:—I. OF DAVID DELIVERED. The wonder is, how so good a man, so gracious a prince, should have enemies and rebels; should fall into such dangers and afflictions; should need so many deliverances. But even in the best men there is something amiss. All saints are sinners, and sin will be punished in God's children soonest of all. It is impossible for governors to escape the smart of popular murmurings, tumults, and rebellions; for Moses the meekest, David the best, and Solomon the wisest of kings did not. The best of kings may be under the Cross, and need deliverances. II. OF GOD HIS DELIVERER. That all deliverance comes from the Lord needs no proof, from Scripture or reason. Philosophers, poets, historians all acknowledge this truth. The heathen everywhere ascribe all good successes to their gods. Among us there are some who will not allow God to govern in His own house, but deny Him any care of things below. As He only brings us into affliction, so He only can remove the afflictions. If we believe this most certain truth, that all deliverance is from the Lord, we must show the fruits of that faith when in distress. III. OF DAVID'S THANKFULNESS FOR HIS DELIVERANCE. Here observe—1. The person performing it. That is, David. "I will do it," saith he. 2. The duty itself. That is, thanksgiving. "I will give thanks." 3. The manner how he will do it, and that is—(1) publicly, (2) cheerfully. Gratitude is not the business of a year, but of a whole life. (*Gilbert Sheldon, D.D.*)

Ver. 50. **Great deliverance giveth He to the King.**—*Great deliverances*:—This is Christ's resurrection Psalm. It is a Psalm of deliverance or salvation—the two words are the same. This deliverance is one of love, power, and righteousness. The whole history of the Bible from beginning to end pertains to what God calls deliverance. First of all, we have King David's history, the history of deliverance. Secondly, we have in Israel's history a history of deliverance. Thirdly, in Messiah's history we have a history of deliverance. Fourthly, in the Church's history we have a history of deliverance. And lastly, in the history of each individual man we have a history of deliverance. It is deliverance from first to last. (*A. Bonar.*)

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## PSALM XIX.

VER. 1. **The heavens declare the glory of God.**—*The glory of God*:—Nature exists not for a merely natural, but for a moral end; not for what it is, but for what it says or declares. I. WHAT NATURE TELLS US TO THINK OF GOD. 1. Nature reveals God. The race as a whole have heard the declaration of His eternal power and Godhead. In proportion as they have heard, adoring, they have risen in the scale of manhood. 2. Nature declares the knowledge and power of God. The marks of mathematical and geometric law in nature are conspicuous. The more we explore the different departments of nature, the more we find it pervaded by strict arithmetical and dynamic laws. We meet "thought" everywhere. The race of man, as a whole, has heard, and to some extent understood, the testimony of nature to infinite thought and power. 3. Nature declares that God is just and good. This has been called in question. Nature says that every natural law, if obeyed, tends to happiness. Nature's laws are benevolent. Men have not fully appreciated this,



for one reason, because they have so commonly broken those laws and have suffered. But does nature in any wise speak of the Divine mercy? This question has often been wrongly answered. Listen attentively, and you will hear nature say that God is merciful. It is a striking fact that very many, if not all, physical penalties can be mitigated, if not relieved, by some counter law, some curious side-process or arrangement. God has so made nature as practically to encourage self-sacrifice for each other. Whenever men take pains for each other, to help each other over their faults and their consequences, there is an illustration, however faint, of the Divine principle of mercy. Mercy is the policy of the Divine government; it is the character of God Himself.

II. WHAT GOD THINKS OF NATURE. 1. God looks upon nature as a basis of language. Let the heavenly orbs be for signs. Signs are vehicles of ideas. Let them say something; let them be words. The universe is God's telephone, God's grand signal service system by which He can flash messages from the heights above to the deepest valleys below. The material system is God's great instrument of conversation. 2. God tells us what to think of this eloquent material system. It is God's most glorious schoolroom by which to teach us reality,—above all, to teach us self-government, and painstaking for one another. Why are we in such a world? Because we needed to be. We need what we get here. We need that knowledge of ourselves which nature can give. We need to be where we are. We need just the restraints and the liberties, the trials and the triumphs, the joys and the sorrows, the smiles and the tears, the bliss and the anguish of this strange life. And in all, and through all, we need to know Him who placed us here, and is revealing Himself to us in a thousand ways. (*Charles Beecher.*)

*The Biblical conception of nature:*—The whole of revelation reposes on this broad platform: how God and nature stand to one another. Now, there are two opposite extremes into which our conceptions on this point may fall. We may immerse God in nature; or we may isolate nature from God. 1. We immerse God in nature if we treat nature as itself possessed of properties which are strictly personal; as when, for example, we accustom ourselves to think of it as originating its own processes, as intending its own results, or as conscious of its own plan. Men talk of nature as though it were aiming at certain ends, striving to accomplish them, adapting itself to new conditions, overcoming fresh obstacles, and so forth. The corrective lies in the scriptural idea of creation as an act of will of One who is outside of material being. Scripture is strictly philosophical when it traces all phenomena, all change, ultimately to a will. But will is an attribute of personality; and the Person whose will determines that nature should be what it is must be a Person not Himself included in the nature which He wills shall be. He is God. Again—2. We may unduly isolate nature as God's workmanship from God the worker. We do this, *e.g.*, when we conceive of the universe as teaching us nothing of God, being only a whirl of material change without spiritual meaning; or when we represent it as a machine which, being somehow endued with a given stock of force, must go on so long as the force lasts, like a watch that has been once wound up. To separate the work from the worker after this sheer and mechanical fashion may do some harm to science, and it leaves hardly any foothold for religion. Again, the spiritual conception of creation will furnish the corrective. According to it, God is personally separate from and above nature, yet for all that He has put into His handiwork His own thoughts. We may fairly say that both sides of the idea lie in embryo in the solitary phrase, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made." For the word of any person serves two functions: it is the organ of command, conveying an act of will; it is also the organ of expression, revealing the speaker's nature. Stupendous conception of primary force! The force of personal will, resident in the Supernatural Being, in the one sole unmade, unborn Person, who is that He is; is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty. The sole cause; sole origin of being; sole efficient factor in the beginning; is this act of volition or self-determination of an Infinite Personal Will. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." It accords with experience; it satisfies philosophy; not less does it meet the religious necessities of the spirit; for if I am to worship at all, where shall I find a nobler object of worship than the Person who will give being to all beings but Himself? On the other hand, the word of a speaker while it utters his will must no less reflect, consciously or unconsciously, his inner self. It seems to me that in this Biblical conception of nature as the revelation of its Maker we find the common root whence have grown two very dissimilar growths of the ancient and of the modern world. The great fact of the whole ancient world was this, that its multiform religions started from a nature basis. The sun and stars, the repre-

ductive forces of animal and vegetable life, the decay and revival of the year, the wondrous cycle, in short, of cosmic change through which nature accomplishes herself, was the common fact which very early riveted the attention of primitive man, till out of it there grew up in many lands, under many shapes, a system of religious observance everywhere the same in principle. Being whose thoughts these objects revealed, men began to adore the symbol, and to forget the Invisible Person behind it. Easy and rapid was the downward plane to idolatry and polytheism and gross fetish-worship. Yet what is worth noting is, that such nature religions would have been impossible had not nature really spoken to unsophisticated men a Divine message, had it not been charged to their souls from the first with Divine ideas. We are far enough removed now from that early stage of human experience. The world is grown aged, and the work of its age is not to worship nature, but to master it. Yet this modern science which leads to the utilisation of physical forces for human needs is not less an outgrowth from the same root. For all our power over nature reposes immediately on our correct reading of natural laws. Observation of naked facts will never put into man's hand the sceptre of the physical world. Naked facts must lead on to the discovery of law; and law is the Divine idea governing the facts; and when man has discovered and mastered that Divine idea, then he becomes in his degree a divinity on earth, a lord over matter, a maker and disposer in his turn. What does this mean but that we come to read behind phenomena the thought and will of One whom, because He is a personal Spirit as we are, we can comprehend? We reach the secret principles on which He makes, not made merely but is ever making, the world; and when we thus know His mind, or on what lines His will moves, we enter upon a share of His dominion; we fall in with His working plan; we, too, govern by imitating Him. I have cited both ancient nature worship and modern nature study as alike dependent for their possibility upon the same truth of Scripture; this, namely, that nature, being made by God's Word, speaks to us His thoughts. But if I desired conclusive evidence how insufficient is this revelation of itself to guide men to friendly communion with God, where could I find any more conclusive than is furnished by the history both of ancient nature religions and of modern science! Of the one the tendency was more and more to immerse God in nature, till He was wholly lost in His own handiwork. Of the latter—modern science—the tendency very decidedly is to isolate nature from God, as a wholly separate existence whose relationship to its Author (if any) is at least unknown. This moral revelation, which began with Abraham and culminated in Jesus Christ, admits of being both compared and contrasted with the older nature revelation. 1. The later revelation starts from and builds upon the earlier one. It is not so often recollected as it should be, but once seen it cannot be doubted that underneath every other relationship which the God of the Bible claims to sustain to us as Lawgiver, Father, Redeemer, Promiser, Saviour there lies this broad, original relationship of all—that He is our Creator. That tie to Him, which we share with even the dumb cattle and the dead earth, bears up and justifies all the rest. Man is a portion of the created universe, and its Maker must be his Lord and King. 2. It must be clear that such a revelation as we actually possess in the Bible is only possible if God be (as the Bible teaches) at once above nature, and yet present, self-revealed in nature. First of all, we are ourselves part of the world, and if we are to receive communications that transcend what the world itself can tell us, then He who gives them must stand outside of and above the world. The supernatural is impossible if God be inseparable from nature or be its slave. On the other hand, the actual revelation recorded in the Bible employed nature as its organ. In the revelation of new truth God is constantly found availing Himself of the old creation. Dreams, and visions, and voices to the ear, the thunder-cloud on Sinai, the cleft sea, dearth and the plague, the vicissitudes of war, conquest, and revolt were all turned into vehicles for teaching saving lessons to mankind. The whole of Bible teaching, too, attaches itself to the parables of nature. Above all, His final revelation of Himself is in the life of a Man, a true natural life resting on the physical basis of a true body, "born of a woman"; so that the highest of all revelations is in appearance the most human, the least supernatural. 3. The voice of the new revelation agrees with the voice of the old. To develop the congruousness of the Divine image in nature with the Divine image in Scripture would take too long; I only suggest it to you. The absolute unity of plan which strict research is daily proving more and more—a unity now known to reach as far as the planets in their spheres—attests that the Creator is one. And Scripture proceeds on the unity

of God. (b) Throughout all nature we find a will at work whose method is to bind itself by orderly method and fixed law. This reveals a mind in God intolerant of what is arbitrary, eccentric, or illegal. All is variety, yet all is system. Now, the revelation of the Divine will in Scripture is likewise the revelation of a law, and its chief end is the reduction of moral anarchy to moral order. (c) Again, we are daily learning how patiently, and through what long, slow, even laborious processes God has been pleased to build up His physical universe, as though a thousand years were to Him of no more account than a single day, so long as the results are wrought by growth and evolution, rather than by sudden shocks or interventions. This is God's way in nature, and it has been His way in grace. (d) Once more, the God of nature avenges the transgression of every physical law by a sentient creature. Scripture discovers precisely the same features in the moral and spiritual rule of God. So far the two revelations walk abreast. Thanks be to God, the Gospel continues its parable where the voice of nature falters and grows mute. Of law, of transgression, of penalty and reward, of life and death, nature has no less to say than the Bible has. But of another law higher than that of penalty, of grace which transcends judgment, of the spiritual law of self-sacrifice, of redemption of life by life, and giving up of the just for the unjust, and forgiveness of sin and regeneration of the lapsed,—the physical universe is wholly, or all but wholly, silent. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *God's works and Word.*—Providence is the best schoolmaster. This Psalm leads us, and is designed to lead us, to a contemplation of nature. Not the faintest apprehension appears, lest contradictions may be discovered between the world-book and the word-book. The sympathy with nature is complete, and not the less so because the poet has been enabled to penetrate the closest of her secrets. "The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings-forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace." Just that is the wisdom here. The study is a reverent study. God is seen everywhere. The lines are saturated with theology. There are, however, other voices of praise. While, doubtless, the heavens are the work of God's fingers and declare His glory, His Word is yet "more to be desired." Fascinated as David has been with the contemplation of the Creator's works, he does not make the blunder of despising the written revelation. Some of the grounds for a conclusion which so exalts the Word above the works. 1. A comparison of the contents of the two revelations. From nature we may learn the existence of an infinite personal God. But is this mighty Author of the universe a friend? There throbs the tremendous interrogation concerning which the heavens make to the eager shepherd boy no answer. With regard to the problems which most deeply affect our welfare, nature only baffles us. The Gospel far surpasses all that nature can be made to teach. 2. Not only in its contents, but in the proclamation of them, is the Word magnified. Consider the instrumentalities selected for the utterance of the Gospel. Angels, the Son of God. 3. Consider by what enforcement of his Word God is magnified. In nature there is no provision for effectively reaching the conscience and moving the will. To apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ, the Spirit has come. 4. Observe the stupendous effects produced by God's Word. "Enlightening the eyes," "rejoicing the heart," "making wise the simple," "converting the soul," here are effects chiefly wrought by God's Word. (*Hanford A. Edson, D.D.*) *The testimony of the works and the Word.*—Nature is the volume in which the Godhead of the Creator is plainly discoverable. Scripture is the volume in which all may read the Divine will concerning men. I. NATURE'S TESTIMONY TO THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. Nature is here pictured as comprising the "heavens" and the "firmament," together with alternating days and nights—these sublime works witnessing for God. David attempts to teach no lesson in astronomy. He imagines an observant and thoughtful man opening his eyes upward, and affirms that what this man beholds proves the presence and power of God. These heavens are for ever telling or revealing the presence, power, majesty, supremacy of the Infinite. What he means to say is, that the realm of nature, beautiful in outline, vast in proportions, grand in order and methods of movement, illustrates glorious qualities of being and of character, and that in this creation the good of man and of all sentient beings has been so manifestly sought and secured that God therein is plainly revealed as ever present in power and in proclamation of Himself. Here, then, is not astronomy, but revelation. A scene in which he affirms that the humblest observer may be convinced of God's existence and glory. These things could not have originated in what has been called a "casual hit of atoms," they must have had a Creator, and the Creator can be no other than an infinite and eternal God. II. THE REVELATION



OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE. Looking first at the stellar world, and viewing the splendour of a solar day, David confesses his vision of God is incomplete, and so he affirms the Infinite to come nearer to man than in the stars, and making Himself better known in "the law," "the testimony," "the statutes," "the Commandments," and in the providences which play around him. The term "law" may refer to the "preceptive portions of Scripture"; "testimonies" may mean doctrines; "statutes," ordinances and forms of worship; "commandments" are directions to duty; "fear" indicates anxiety to please God; and "judgments" are God's record or declaration of the results of unforgiven sin. But all these terms may be gathered up as referring to the body of Scripture, revelations which have been made either by voice, or vision, or inspiration in any form. The writer's purpose was to indicate the excellent properties and purposes of Scripture, including precept, promise, and perfect rules of life. Calling this revelation the "statutes of God," the idea evidently is of something binding on universal man. Calling it "the fear of the Lord" seems to refer to that filial affection which reigns in a human heart, making man ashamed of sin, and becoming for him a cleansing power. "Judgments of the Lord" is a comprehensive phrase, summing up the substance and object of Scripture.

III. THE LAW, TESTIMONY, STATUTES, COMMANDMENTS, FEAR, AND JUDGMENTS OF THE LORD TESTED. Put them to the test of personal experience. This shall prove whether or no the claim of the Psalmist has warrant in the lives of men. There never was a man who received the law of God into his heart and obeyed it who did not become a "new man," enriched thereby beyond all measurement or estimate. (*Justin E. Twitchell.*) *God's glory in the skies*:—The immediate outlook upon nature is independent of scientific elaboration. It is unalterable by intellectual mutations and advances; it rests on those permanent relations which hold between the soul of man within and the world without. But the whole stress of the Psalm is laid on that aspect of the natural world which it is the work of science to emphasise and to extricate. What the Psalmist sees is the manifestation of law, of regularity, of reason. There is about it all, as the mighty drama discloses itself, the calmness, the majesty, of rational knowledge. The awful silence in which the tremendous scene proceeds is more eloquent than words. Dumb in the vault, yet filled with voices that toll in our ears, voices that cry without a language, and assure us of that eternal consciousness which possesses the entire round of the heavens, whose rule and line goeth out throughout all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. Universal law acting in silence, with absolute security of rhythm. The mystic eloquence of law. That is the vision which overawes the Psalmist; and is not that the very essence of our scientific presentation of nature? Law acting in silence, that is nature as science discloses it. Silent as it may be, this perfect law, this undeviating order, this calm precision, this infinite regularity of succession, this steady certainty of movement, this unbroken universality, these disciplined forces, this rhythmic harmony, this balance, this precaution, this response of day to night, and night to night, that is intelligence, that is reason, that is consciousness, that is speech! No one can face it in its wholeness, part answering to part, and each to all, without becoming aware of its mystic eloquence. It all speaks, speaks as it works, speaks without a language, speaks without a sound. The Psalmist has but to lift his eyes, and then above it, allied to it, a corresponding world opens out,—a world, too, of law, of certainty, of regularity, of order, no less than the world of nature. Here, too, all is sane, rational, secure, quiet, and sure, as the silent stars in the night. This higher order of life moves along the course set before it, and its laws never flag or fail; no chance confuses it, and no unruly accident disturbs it. This world is the world of consciousness, the world of the moral law, the world of the religious spirit, the world of the fear of the Lord. Laws, statutes, testimonies, commandments,—no physical world could be based on grounds more fixed and uniform and sure. Everywhere precision, everywhere unalterable rigour—that is what delights him. Error, wrong, sin—these may be on his own side, but this does not shake the absolute authority of this reign of law without him. Only, it makes him tremble, lest even unwittingly he may have introduced any quiver of disturbance into this fabric of exquisite and harmonious order. Who can tell how oft he offendeth? "Oh, cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Can we recover at all for ourselves this mental temper of the Psalmist? This world of which he is speaking is what we name spiritual, religious, supernatural, and as soon as we have touched such names as these we recall something wholly unlike nature, wholly opposed to scientific law and the necessities of reason. Yet

veracity, regularity, universality, these are the very notes of the Divine action in both spheres, and in both, therefore, there is the same ground for reason to work upon. Nature will enable us to understand the supernatural. Our faith in Christ Jesus lays large and unfaltering trust in the veracity of human faculties, in the solidity of knowledge, in the reality of an instructed and intelligent experience. Base your belief in Jesus on the convictions that form the ground of your confidence in the stability and reality of life. (*Canon Scott Holland.*) *The moral law and the starry heavens*:—"Two things," said Kant, "fill the soul with awe and wonder: the starry heaven above, and the moral law within." How many of us have felt this amazement without expressing it! Approach man from a material point of view, and he is utterly insignificant; but view him from a spiritual point of view, and how wonderful is he! That strange faculty within him which witnesses to a law above himself, which speaks to him of the right even when he is yielding to the wrong, which enables him to hold communion with infinite perfection, which gives meaning to such words as "trust," "duty," "obedience," "religion," that faculty which perpetuates in him the image of his Maker; whence did it come? "Yes," said Pascal, "man is a worm, but then he is a worm that thinks." This is exactly the mystery which filled a mind so powerful as that of Kant. To see no mystery in man and his spiritual nature is a sure mark of a shallow and second-rate mind. What is the thought which the contemplation of the heavenly bodies presents to us most prominently? Is it not order or "law"? But how about the spiritual world? Are there laws for mind as well as for body? Is there not an order in moral things which cannot be violated with impunity? The Kingdom of Heaven is a reign of law too. One order alike for the material and the moral. The law of the material world we reach through observation and generalisation; the law of the soul through God's revelations of Himself to man's spiritual nature, but both are alike of God, and not two laws but one. How pure, elevating, and ennobling was the writer's conception of true religion. (*J. A. Jacob, M.A.*) *God's works and Word*:—Every varying mood of nature is an index finger to the power and glory of the Creator. His works lie open beside His Word,—the one a volume of illustrations, the other a book of inspired principles. In the 19th Psalm these double volumes of revelation are bound together. There is both a world-book and a word-book in the Psalmist's thought. Both are bearing eternal witness to the Creator. I. THE WITNESS OF THE HEAVENS. In the clear dry air of the East the heavens shine with a strange brilliancy. To the reverent soul of David, the stars in their courses and the moon in her phases were nightly lessons of wonder and of God. To the Psalmist's eye the whole firmament was written over, and the whole universe was resonant to his ear with the name of God. And to the eyes of this devout shepherd, this witness of creation to its Creator was continuous. And yet this witness of the heavens is silent. It is their silence which puts such terrible emphasis upon the testimony of the heavens; for silence is the great law of the universe. This witness is also universal in its reach and influence. The stars preach a gospel of Divine law and power, before which worshippers of all races and generations have kneeled in reverence and awe. But man, made in the likeness of God, is not measured by physical, but by moral standards. The moral law written upon conscience and soul has brought man into fellowship with the Infinite, and there follows that sharp transition in thought which cuts this Psalm like the keen stroke of a knife when David remembers the glory of God's law. Grandeur than that of the heavens is—II. THE WITNESS OF THE MORAL LAW. In this sudden rebound from the glory of the sun to the greater glory of the truth the Psalmist seems to chide himself for having forgotten the greater in the less. For what the sun is in the natural world, bringing light and inspiring growth, the law of God is in the spiritual, revealing moral darkness and quickening the life of souls. Climbing up adjectives of admiring descriptions, David unfolds the nature of the Word of Jehovah. It is "perfect," with a completeness which fits all needs and encompasses all souls. It is "sure,"—an eternal verity to which men may anchor and never drift. It is "right," with an absolute rectitude and justice. This Divine law not only reveals the glory of Jehovah, but also—III. IT REVEALS THE HEART OF MAN. Without the revelation of the mirror man is a stranger to his own face; without the revelation of God's law we were strangers to the guilt of sin. For the law lays a man bare to himself. Gather up the lesson of the Psalm—1. That there is no conflict between God's works and God's Word. There may be conflict between the flippant guesses of men and the "Thus saith the Lord" in the Book. But the world-book and the word-book are one and

the same truth. 2. The Psalm reveals the vastness and variety of the witnesses which God has put about us. The heathen of all lands have deified the forces of nature and the planets of the sky, and worshipped. Such witness is ours, but supplemented by the written Word, the enlightened conscience, the civilised state, and the Christian Church. (*Monday Club Sermons.*) *The revelation in nature:*—Modern poets are never tired of dwelling on the beauties of nature. The Hebrew poet perceived these just as keenly, but he never set them forth for their own sake. He considered them only as they bear on our moral and spiritual relations with God, or as they illustrate the being and glory of the Most High. So it is here. The first line sets forth the continuous action of the transparent vault which arches over the earth. Its order and beauty and splendour are not the work of chance or the product of blind unconscious forces, but bear willing witness to the perfections of the one Supreme Creator. He made them, and they are for ever telling the story of His unsearchable riches. There is no pause, no interruption in the testimony. Day after day, night after night, the unbroken succession goes on. It is poured out as from a copious, gushing fountain. The sentiment is as true as it is poetical. In every age and land the starry heavens have proclaimed to the thoughtful observer: "It is He that hath made us." The fact that this is done without the use of articulate language, so far from weakening the testimony makes it stronger. A modern critic coolly expunges this couplet on the ground that it is prosaic and that it directly contradicts the preceding verse, whereas it is a fine statement of the fact that words are not literally used; and there is no more contradiction in it than in the common proverb, "Actions speak louder than words." The heavens "have a voice, but it is one that speaks not to the ear but to the devout and understanding heart," as Addison has well expressed it in the well-known stanzas, according to which the radiant orbs, though they move in solemn silence, still in reason's ear rejoice. In the next couplet the poet proceeds further. Not only is the testimony of the heavens distinct and clear and unbroken, but it is also universal. Their "line" means their measuring line, for this is the established meaning of the word, and there is neither need nor justification for changing the text. The province of these witnesses for God is co-extensive with the earth. Everywhere the heavens compass the globe, and "everywhere they preach the same Divine sermon." In the Epistle to the Romans (x. 18) the Apostle employs these words to express the wide diffusion of the Gospel among the Gentiles, and its freedom from all national or ecclesiastical restrictions. As Hengstenberg well says, "The universal revelation of God in nature was a providential prediction of the universal proclamation of the Gospel." The Apostle says their "sound" instead of their "line," because he followed the Septuagint version. The sense is, of course, the same. In Paul's day the Gospel occupied the central position in the Roman world: it is for Christians now to make it actually as universal as the witness of the heavens. To carry still further forward the figure, the sun is introduced because his apparent course indicates clearly the width of the domain covered by the testimony of the heavens. In them is his position. All talk of sun-gods in this connection is simple folly. David is not reciting mythology, but writing poetry. In this view he compares the bright re-appearance of the morning sun to that of a bridegroom coming forth from the nuptial apartment, and his steady ongoing through the skies to the rapid course of a hero on his joyful way to the goal of victory. Nothing can be more striking than these figures. The king of day starts from one end of heaven and never pauses till he reaches the other, and his presence is one that can be felt as well as seen, for nothing can hide itself from his heat. Here comes a quick transition from God's revelation of Himself in nature to the similar revelation in the written Word. Its abruptness is quite excusable in view of the analogy, the law being in the spiritual world what the sun is in the natural. (*Talbot W. Chambers, D.D.*) *God's works and Word:*—The Bible recognises no conflict between science and religion. It asserts a unity of origin for the Word and the world. Faith takes God's word; science takes man's. But

"Science walks with humble feet  
To seek the God that faith has found."

**I. THAT THE BIBLE NOWHERE CONTRADICTS ESTABLISHED SCIENCE.**—This is an amazing statement, for the Bible was written by unlearned men. Every truth of to-day has been opposed by men, not by Scripture. No doubt the Bible often speaks of things as they appear to the eye, as sunrise and sunset. But these are not contradictions to science. **II. THE BIBLE ALWAYS HAS BEEN, AND IS YET, FAR IN**



**ADVANCE OF THE DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE.** Ere science discovered the order of progress in the developed world, or that the strata of the earth were formed by the action of water, and that the mountains were once under the sea; or that the earth was a sphere; or that the earth was upheld by no visible support; or that the stars were innumerable; or that light makes music as it flies; or that the sun had an orbit of its own—the Bible had said all these things. The Word is as full of undiscovered wisdom as the world. **III. VERY FEW SCIENTIFIC MEN RECOGNISE ANY ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE REVELATION BY WORD AND THAT BY WORKS.** The American Association for the Advancement of Science embraces the great names in this country. At its last meeting it was found that seven-eighths of these were professing Christians. The greatest of them see God in nature to-day. **IV. NATURE IS A UNIVERSAL REVELATION OF GOD, BUT OF THE LOWEST KIND.** The heavens so declare the glory of God that even a heathen savage is without excuse if he do not discern God. The law of the Lord is the next higher revelation. See what is here said of it. But the highest revelation is Christ. He brings life and love to light; reveals a greater power in spiritual realms than gravitation is in material realms. But all revelations are one and of one God. (*Bishop R. W. Warren.*) *The revelation of the prophecy of the heavens:*—**I. THE HEAVENS A REVELATION OF GOD.** They show God's character, as all works show character. The fault has been in men if they have not apprehended the declaration of the heavens. Paul said it could be "clearly seen." This revelation is—1. Ceaseless. 2. Wordless. The Hebrew rightly rendered reads—"No speech nor language; their voice is not heard." That is, they utter no articulate words. 3. Universal. "Their line"—the measuring line used for the determining the boundaries of estates—takes in the whole earth; throughout this vast territory the signs which proclaim God are found. **II. THIS REVELATION A PROPHECY OF THAT OF THE GOSPEL.** For it also is universal. Hence Paul quotes this Psalm. But how came Paul to see this meaning in David's words? Because the heavens are Christ's handiwork. "Without Him was nothing made that was made." And they manifest and declare Him. It is plain, therefore, that if He thus send His heavens to proclaim Him through all lands, and to sing His praise, much more will He desire that the Gospel of His grace by which far more glory will be His should be known far and wide, to the ends of the earth, that none may be hid from its saving light and heat. What a teacher, then, we have in the heavens. They sing to us of God, and of God in Christ. They declare the glory of Him whom not having seen we love. (*Samuel Coz, D.D.*) *God's two great preachers:*—**I. NATURE AS A PREACHER.** It continues its eloquent discourse from age to age, and its aim in all is to draw the mind of man from the visible to the invisible, from the material to the spiritual, from itself to universal being. **II. THE BIBLE AS A PREACHER.** This preacher is called by different names, "law," "testimony," "statutes," "commandments," "fear of the Lord," "judgments of the Lord." 1. The character of this preacher. Perfect, established, righteous, holy, thoroughly sound, precious. 2. The work of this preacher. (1) A soul-restoring work. (2) A mind-enlightening work. (3) A heart-gladdening work. (4) A life-regulating work. (5) A sin-convincing work. (6) A prayer-exciting work. The Psalmist prays against sin, and he prays for holiness. The text implies three facts concerning human words and thoughts—1. That God takes cognisance of them. 2. That God is pleased with right words and thoughts. 3. That God aids man in the promotion of right words and thoughts. (*Homilist.*) *Nature a preacher:*—Five subjects for thought. **I. THE SUBJECT OF THE DISCOURSE.** "The glory of God." Nature proclaims God's existence, government, and attributes. 1. The fact of nature reveals the being of God. 2. The vastness of nature, the immensity of God. 3. The uniformity of nature, the unity of God. 4. The regularity of nature, the unchangeableness of God. 5. The arrangements of nature, the wisdom of God. 6. The happiness of nature, the goodness of God. 7. The purity of nature, the holiness of God. 8. The beauty of nature, the tastefulness of God. 9. The variety of nature, the exhaustlessness of God. **II. THE INCESSANTNESS OF ITS DELIVERY.** Nature as a preacher never tires, never pauses. Whilst generations come and go, this great preacher continues his sublime discourse without a break or pause. **III. THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF ITS LANGUAGE.** Its language is that of symbol; the easiest language for man to understand. A language of signs, addressed to eye and heart. So intelligible is the language that there is no excuse for ignorance of God. **IV. THE VASTNESS OF ITS AUDIENCE.** Their "line"—that is, their instruction. All men live under those heavens, all of which are vocal with discourse of God.

V. THE IMMENSITY OF ITS RESOURCES. 1. The greatest light dwells in the heart of this preacher. 2. The greatest light circulates through the whole being of this preacher. From the subject learn—(1) Man's capacity to study and to worship God. (2) Man's obligation to study and to worship God. Study nature scientifically and religiously. (*Homilist.*) *Nature in Scripture*:—The scientific contemplation of nature is wholly absent from Scripture, and the picturesque is very rare. This Psalmist knew nothing about solar spectra, or stellar distances, but he heard a voice from out of the else waste heavens which sounded to him as if it named God. Comte ventured to say that the heavens declare the glory of the astronomer, not of God; but if there be an order in them, which it is a man's glory to discover, must there not be a mind behind the order, and must not the Maker have more glory than the investigator? The Psalmist is protesting against stellar worship, which some of his neighbours practised. The sun was a creature, not a god; his "race" was marked out by the same hand which in depths beyond the visible heavens had pitched a "tent" for his nightly rest. We smile at the simple astronomy; the religious depth is as deep as ever. Dull ears do not hear these voices; but whether they are stopped with the clay of earthly tastes and occupations, or stuffed with scientific wadding of the most modern kind, the ears that do not hear God's name sounded from the abysses above have failed to hear the only word which can make man feel at home in nature. Carlyle said that the sky was a "sad sight." The sadness and awfulness are taken away when we hear the heavens telling the glory of God. The unscientific Psalmist who did hear them was nearer the very heart of the mystery than the scientist who knows everything else about them but that. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) *God revealed in nature*:—Is the picture to be accepted as a revelation of the artist's genius? Is the poem to be regarded as a test of the poet's mental power? Then carry this rule with you in all your contemplations of the universe—as you walk beneath the dome of heaven, as you tremble in the shadows of the everlasting hills, as you rise into rapture while gazing on the swelling grandeur of the great deep and feel yourself wrapt in the presence of God. The universe is the thought of God made visible. (*R. Venting.*) *God seen in nature*:—The immortal Newton exclaimed, "Glory to God, who has permitted me to catch a glimpse of the skirts of His garments. My calculations have encountered the march of the stars." So sang Copernicus, Volta, Galileo, and Kepler. How truly did Young write, "the undevout astronomer is mad." *The firmament sheweth His handiwork.—The comet and its teachings*:—Not often during the lifetime of a generation does a comet present itself. Give thought to the bright vision which no doubt engages the attention of other worlds beside our own, and on which the gaze of the unfallen inhabitants of celestial spheres may be fixed in reverent admiration. 1. Notice its beauty. In the exhaustless provision which God has made for our love of the beautiful we recognise an assurance that He regards with yet tenderer care our far deeper longings, the moral wants of our souls. 2. As we gain from science a knowledge of the movements of the comet we are impressed with the supremacy of law. No portion of the universe is more completely under the control of law than these comets, which were once supposed to be so erratic. Whatever is within the attraction of the sun moves upon one of three curves. As soon as a sufficient portion of the course of any body is known its whole curve can be ascertained. It is to the universal supremacy of law that all the achievements of science have been due. The supremacy of physical is a guarantee for the authority and permanence of moral law. The same Being who has established the one has pledged His veracity to the maintenance of the other. 3. Further knowledge of this comet impresses us with the magnitude of the universe. How numberless are the bodies inhabiting the measureless expanse. Of these worlds, is it likely that ours alone is inhabited? 4. Viewed in the light of these considerations, how insignificant does the world appear! And how insignificant is man! It is his soul alone that gives him dignity in the scale of being. 5. What a conception does a just view of the universe give us of the greatness and dignity of God! Who can escape His eye? Who can defy His power? 6. How great is the Divine condescension, especially as manifested in the atonement! (*H. L. Wayland.*)

Ver. 2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.—*Instruction to be derived from the revolution of day and night*:—I. THE ALMIGHTY POWER OF THE CREATOR AND PRESERVER OF THE UNIVERSE. The very act of creation, or the producing of any being out of nothing, gives us the most enlarged idea of Omnipotence. The Almighty not only at first created, but con-

tinually upholds, the work of His hands. His mighty energy is continually displayed in the preservation of all the creatures He hath made. II. THE GOODNESS OF GOD. Attend particularly to man, the noblest work of God. Every faculty of our nature and every circumstance of our condition afford abundant evidence of the goodness of God. Through the faculty of reason we are blessed with moral perception: we know what is right and what is wrong. The exercise of our mental powers is accompanied with pleasure. In the scheme of redeeming grace unfolded in the Gospel we have the most illustrious display of the Divine benignity which men or angels have ever witnessed. And if we consider ourselves as creatures in a state of trial we find ourselves furnished with all the direction, assistance, and encouragement that such a state requires. III. THE WISDOM OF GOD. Wisdom, whenever it is employed, must have happiness for its object; and when that is promoted by fit means, wisdom shows itself to the utmost advantage. Every object that contributes to our happiness is admirably contrived for that end; and every evidence of Divine goodness brings with it a concomitant proof of Divine wisdom. The body and the mind want the rest of night, and partake of this refreshment. The faculties of the soul cannot long bear intense application. Attend now to the religious and moral instructions which this subject suggests. 1. Let every revolution of day and night raise our thoughts to God. Let us attend to the daily revolution, not with the coldness of a philosophic inquirer, but with the ardent piety of devout worshippers of the God of nature and grace. But it is in the scheme of redemption, unfolded in the Gospel, that we behold the Divine perfections shining with the most resplendent lustre. The light of the sun of righteousness throws new beauty upon the creation of God. 2. Consider the experience we have had of the power, goodness, wisdom, and mercy of God in the by-past of our life. It were endless to enumerate the instances of the Divine goodness and mercy in which we have shared. 3. Every revolving year, every revolving day, tells us that the period of our probation is hastening to an end. Then watch against a worldly temper and disposition of mind. Watch against building our hopes on general truths and promises, without any evidence of our interest in them. (*James Ross, D.D.*) *Silent sounds*:—It sounds rather curious, does it not, to hear about one day speaking to another? Though you have listened ever so hard, yet you have not been able to hear a day speaking. That is true; and David, who wrote this Psalm, knew that also, for he says in the very next verse, "No speech, no language, their voice is not heard"—and yet, "day unto day uttereth speech"! How can that be? Because there are more ways of speaking than one. There is the way the deaf and dumb speak—on their fingers. Their voice is not heard, yet they speak. Then a book speaks. The moment it is open, and you see the words, you understand what they mean—they speak to you. There is a tribe of savage people far away, and what do you think is the name they give to a book? They call it "the whisperer." But it does not whisper; it has no voice nor sound, and yet it speaks. Now, how do you come to understand what people say when they speak on their fingers? or how do you ever come to know what a book says? Isn't it by first learning how to understand? And you carry the way to understand inside yourself. So is it that we understand thousands of things round about us, and that tells us of God. The way, then, to understand what the days speak is to get much of God's spirit into our hearts. The days say—I. THERE'S NOTHING NEW! To-day is just like yesterday. Yesterday came up beautiful, became brighter, had clouds and sunshine, and then faded away. So it will be with to-day. Yesterday carried away on its white wings the spirits of thousands of men and women, and wee children too; and the night came, and covered their bodies, and they were seen no more. So it will be to-day. There's nothing new. But as you listen again you hear the days say—II. EVERYTHING IS NEW! There is nothing new about the day, but everything is new about you. The temptations you will have to-day won't be the same that you had yesterday; the night has come like a black wall between you and yesterday, and to-day you get a fair start again; and to-day you may do better than yesterday, or to-day you may do worse, but you can't blame yesterday. It is gone; this is a new day, but, take care! you will be tempted to-day in another way. So, you can't afford to forget Jesus: a new day means a new way, and only Jesus can guide you rightly upon it. But this also the days say—III. TIME TELLS OF ETERNITY! As the days pass away, we pass away with them—passing away, out into eternity. When you are in a train or a tramcar you notice that all the people do not go to the journey's end. Some go only a little way, others go farther, new ones come in; perhaps you yourself get out before the whole journey is done.



Anyway, they are very few who go all the way. It is just the same with our lives. Some only go a short distance through the days—God calls them away when they are young. Some go a little farther, others a little farther still; but they are very few indeed who come to be very old. Shouldn't every day, then, make us think of what is to be the end of all? (*J. Reid Howett.*) **Night unto night sheweth knowledge.**—*The teaching of the night.*—God divided the sovereignty of time between day and night. I. NIGHT TEACHES THE INDIVIDUALITY OF OUR BEING.

For more than the day, it shows us what it is to be alone with ourselves and God. It drives all the faculties and sensibilities of the soul inward upon itself. The hours of darkness are fearful to those who are afraid to be with themselves and God. Jesus used to retire to desert places, that He might, during the night-time, be alone with the Father. I have myself spent the hours of night alone upon high mountains. A solemn experience. II. THE RETIREMENT OF THE SOUL, IN WHICH GOD'S PRESENCE IS MOST FELT, NEED NOT TAKE US AWAY FROM THE CROWDED PATHS OF LIFE. Where we see most of man, there we can see most of God. A spiritually minded man once said that he felt God's presence with him in walking the crowded and noisy streets of New York as really as he did in the sanctuary or in the solemn hour of devotion. III. THE NIGHT OF THE NATURAL WORLD IS THE SYMBOL OF THE DEEPER NIGHT OF SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT THAT SETTLES DOWN UPON THE SOUL. God surrounds us with both, that we may feel for His hand in the darkness, and find ourselves safe with His protection. We learn from the night of affliction and trouble many lessons which we could never master in the light of broad day. In the awful night-hour of death we need not find ourselves alone. He has been all the way through the valley of the shadow of death, and He will not leave us to grope in vain for His hand. (*D. Marsh, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **No speech nor language; their voice cannot be heard.**—*Silent voices.*—The Psalmist, like a true poet, had a keen eye and ear. He saw in the firmament the glory of God, and he heard, around him and beneath, a chorus of praise to the Most High. Two interpretations have been put upon this verse. The first, that there is no country or clime, "no speech or language," where the voice of the firmament, &c., is not heard, seeing their "line" or instruction "is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." The other is, that there is no audible voice, no sound that falls upon the ear. Addison writes, "What though in solemn silence," &c. I. SILENT VOICES HAVE OFTEN A MOST POWERFUL INFLUENCE. 1. They may move a man more than uttered words. The voices of nature, the music of the spheres, as it is called, is silence. Lectures hear their place, but audible voices are not so soul-stirring as voices inaudible. 2. The spring, and every season of the year, brings many lessons, and yet "there is no speech or language, its voice is not heard." No man ever heard, with his bodily ear, the language of either day or night, yet every day speaks of God's infinite resources—of His goodness, of His power and glory—more articulate than any man could speak. 3. Solitude speaks to the soul. The mountain top, the dense forest, the restless sea; but their "voice is not heard." The expression of human feeling is often more powerful when inarticulate. II. IN ORDER TO APPREHEND SILENT VOICES WE MUST OURSELVES BE SILENT. Put away distracting thoughts, and humbly listen only to God as He speaks to the soul and conscience. Men cannot even hear music unless they are still, silent, and undistracted. With the soul men hear God, and not with the physical ear, unless they are still and undistracted. It is very desirable that men should commune with God in their work, and be still before Him with their souls, and not with their intellects only. The active intellect is more often used against God than for Him. But God cannot be reached by intellectual processes any more than love, or than the beauties of a landscape can be explained by argument, or than music can be brought home to the soul by logical syllogism. (*James S. Swan.*) *The silent testimony.*—Language is always a difficulty, a snare, a temptation, an inconvenient convenience. It brings us into all our troubles; it is when we speak that we create heterodoxies; could we but be silently dumbly good—could we look our prayers, and cause our face to shine with our benevolence, and our hand do a quiet work of beneficence, how happy would the world be! Words do not mean the same thing to any two men; they may be accepted for momentary uses and for commercial purposes, but when it becomes a matter of life and death, time and eternity, truth and error, words are base counterfeits, that should be nailed to the counter of creation, as things by which a false commerce has been kept up amongst earnest and ardent men. Blessed be God for

the silent testimony, for the radiant character, for the eloquent service. All history is silent; it is only the immediate day that chatters and talks and fusses about its little affairs. Yet the dead centuries are eloquent: the characters are all gone; the warriors are dead and buried, the orators have culminated their eloquence in the silence of death, the great solemn past is like a banquet hall deserted, but it is eloquent, instructive, silently monitorial. Silent history—great, sad, melancholy, impartial history—the spirit of the past should govern the unrest and the tumult of the present. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. *Their line is gone out through all the earth.*—*The Christian brotherhood the support of Christian missions:*—All tradition has interpreted this Psalm of the goings forth of the Spirit in the everlasting Gospel. Nor could a nobler image of the diffusion, the all-pervading and all-penetrating progress of the Gospel of peace be conceived than what the visible heavens present. In antiquity there was no more favourite emblem of the all-pervading presence of Christ than the sun, which, set in heaven, is yet, in its infinite and ceaseless communications of life, present on earth also. Nor does any emblem more frequently occur in Holy Scripture of the bright and peaceful outgoings of the teachers of the faith than the stars; nor any of the streaming in of Divine grace upon the souls of men, in their onward course, than that of light. The Psalmist expresses the view of the Catholic Church, not as man has marred it, but as existing in the eternal mind. And, indeed, the first promise of its fulfilment seemed to foreshow such an end. Who would not have expected from the Acts of the Apostles a very different conclusion from what we now see? Even after the apostolic age there seemed no check in the wondrous progress of the unearthly faith. If the united voice of the Church Catholic, with one undeviating witness for her Lord, had sounded out unceasingly during the fifteen centuries that have since passed, would not the full scope of the prophetic vision have been fulfilled? But a change soon came over the Church's course. What is our prospect now? To us—the English portion of the Catholic communion—a wider field has been opened and ampler powers given for our extension, than ever since the days when the Apostles dispersed themselves from Jerusalem, have fallen to the lot of any single people. . . . We are comparatively powerless when we work alone. We are bound together on the principle that mutual intercessions are the strength of the Church's work. But all efforts fail unless Christ be within us as our life and power. How can we move onward unless He go forth with us? (*T. T. Carter, M.A.*) *The being of God proved from universal consent:*—David does in this place affirm the universality of religion. He supposes the heavens to speak an universal language, heard and understood by all. Hence we argue the existence of God. The argument is, according to Lactantius, that universal and unanimous testimony of people and nations, through all courses of time, who, otherwise differing in language, customs, and conceits, only have agreed in this one matter of opinion. Opinion of Aristotle as to degrees of probability: that which arises from this source approaches near to demonstrable truth. Testimonies of ancient philosophers to this agreement, as well as to its force and efficacy. That men should thus conspire in opinion must needs arise either—1. From a natural light implanted in man's nature; or, 2. From a common inclination in his soul; or, 3. From some prevalent reason, obvious to all men; or, 4. From some common fountain of instruction or primitive tradition. And from any one of these ways being allowed our argument will gain weight and force. If we acknowledge either of the two first we do in effect yield the question: if nature forcibly drives men into this persuasion, how extravagant will it be to oppose her! And if we grant that plain reason, apparent to the generality of men, hath moved them to this consent, do we not, by dissenting from it, renounce common sense? But if we say that it arose in the last manner, from a common instruction or primitive tradition, we shall be thereby driven to inquire who that common master or author of the tradition was: of any such we have no name recorded; we find no time designated when it began to arise. Who, then, were the teachers, but the first parents of mankind? Thus does this consideration lead to another very advantageous to our purpose: first, as proving the generations of men had a beginning; secondly, as affording us their most weighty authority for the doctrine we assert. For—1. Supposing mankind had a beginning on this earth, whence could it proceed but from such a Being as we describe? 2. Supposing this notion derived from the first men, who instilled it into them? Why should they conceive themselves to come from God if He that made them did not discover Himself to them? Thus do

these two notions, that of general tradition concerning God, and that concerning man's origin on earth from one stock, mutually support each other. As to His eternity: if God made all things, He could not receive being from another; and what reason is there to suppose that He should? But as nothing can receive a being from itself, or from mere nothing spring up into being, therefore the Maker of the world must be eternal. Something of necessity must be eternal, otherwise nothing could have been at all; other things show themselves to have proceeded from the wisdom, power, and goodness of One: whence that One is eternal; and so all nations have consented that God is. That He is immortal and immutable doth also follow plainly: for He, not depending for His being, or anything thereto belonging, or any other thing, neither can He depend for His continuance or conservation; having power superior to all things, as having conferred on them whatever of power they have, nothing can oppose Him, or make any prevalent impression on Him, so as to destroy or alter anything in Him. Also, from His making, His upholding, His governing all things, is consequent, that He was ever and is everywhere: where His power is, there His hand is; for every action with effect requires a conjunction of the agent and patient; nothing can act on what is distant. That with His presence and power He doth penetrate all things, operating insensibly and imperceptibly, doth argue the spirituality of His being; and that He doth consist of such matter (so extended, so divisible) as those things do, which we by sense perceive. His overreaching wisdom implies Him incapable of being deceived; and His overbearing power signifies that He doth not need to deceive; and His transcendent goodness proves Him unwilling to deceive: the like we may say of doing wrong; whence are consequent His perfect veracity and justice. Lastly, the excellency of His nature, the eminency of His wisdom and power, the abundance of His goodness; as also, His having given being, then preserving it to all things, do infer His rightful title to supreme dominion; and accordingly, that all love, all obedience, all praise and veneration are due to Him; according to the devout acknowledgment of those blessed elders: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive the glory and honour and power (or authority), because Thou hast made all things; and for Thy will they are and were created." (*I. Barrow, D.D.*)

**In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun.**—*The gifts of nature:*—There was once a time, in the history of the world, when it was the strongest possible temptation to mankind to worship the great objects of nature, but especially those in heaven, and of these especially the sun. In those countries more particularly where the sun is so bright, so powerful, so omnipresent throughout the year the temptation was stronger than anywhere else. Wherever in the Old Testament we hear of the worship of Baal, it is the worship of the sun; and of all the temples so dedicated, this is the most splendid, and the ancient city was called from this worship "Baalbec," or "the City of the Sun." We know from the Bible, we know also from the history of this very temple, that this worship was corrupted into the most shameful sensuality; so that, to the Israelites first, and to Christians afterwards, it became a duty to put it down altogether. And this corruption is in itself instructive, as teaching us that the highest love of art and the keenest appreciation of what is beautiful, if left to itself without some purer and higher principles, may and will degenerate into mere brutal self-indulgence and cruelty. But it is always better, if we can, to see what was the good element which lies at the bottom of any character or institution—what there was in the thoughts that raised these solid foundations and these towering columns, which we may also imitate for ourselves, without falling into those dark errors and sins with which they were once connected. Therefore we could have chosen no more fitting text than the one read to you. Its words tell you of the genial life-giving power of the great light of day, of the glory of his rising, of the strength of his rays, of the regularity of his course, of the penetrating power of his heat, and they spring from a feeling common to the Hebrew Psalmist and to those who raised this heathen temple. What, then, are the good points in that ancient belief which the true religion has adopted for its own and sifted from the surrounding evil? This temple itself is connected with the history and traditions both of the wisest and greatest thoughts of ancient times, and with the basest and most foolish. Its earliest foundations are said to go back to the days of Solomon, the wisest of men. In its latest times it had for its High Priest the most infamous and effeminate of all the Roman emperors—the miserable Heliogabalus. Between the two there was at first sight but little in common. Little, indeed, there is; but it is that little which is so useful to consider. **I. THE SENSE OF DEEP THANKFULNESS FOR THE GIFTS OF NATURE.** Those who lived in old time expressed,



as we see, their gratitude and reverence for the gifts of nature by this magnificent temple. Let us express our gratitude and reverence in the offering of pure hearts and good lives to Him who has thus graciously guided us so nearly to the close of our pilgrimage. II. And this brings me to the second truth which the contemplation of the natural world—of the sun in his strength—suggested to the Psalmist: **THE ORDER, THE REGULARITY, THE LAW OF THEIR OPERATIONS.** And this law immediately recalled his mind to the highest example of all law—the unchangeable moral law of God. He tells us how the law of God (the revealed law of goodness, the natural law of conscience) is not only what we are bound to follow as our duty, but is the surest source both of our wisdom and our happiness. See how he expatiates on this theme in the remainder of the Psalm. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The sun of righteousness*:—There is no doubt that this verse describes the nativity of our Lord. The sun, that we see in the eastern heavens, is made to us an image of our incarnate Lord and Saviour, issuing from the Virgin's womb to be the light and life of the Church. It is not a new or strange thing for Holy Scripture to give such a turn as this to the works of nature, the things which we see daily. Compare the figure in Malachi. "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings." And the figure used by Zacharias, "The Day-spring from on high hath visited us." 1. Every one may understand that as the sun is beyond comparison the brightest object in these outward and visible heavens, so the great privilege of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom and Church of God's saints, is to have the Sun of Righteousness, God-made man, especially present, abiding and reigning in it. The same is true of every soul which is inwardly and spiritually conformed to God's holy Church. It is full of Christ; of Jesus Christ Himself, silently and mysteriously coming in and dwelling there. 2. As Christ is a sun to his Church by His glorious abiding in it, so the manner in which He came to be so is likened to "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber," a figure for Christ's marrying the nature of God to the nature of man, by taking on Him our flesh. Our Saviour, God made man for us, born for us, crucified and risen again, fills the whole Church and the whole world. Christ is whole in His whole Church, and in every part and member of it, as the sun in the firmament shines impartially on the whole world beneath him, and in his circuit visits each part in turn with his warming and life-giving beams. But Christ's faithful people are more particularly made aware of His presence by the outward means of grace and the visible ordinances of His holy Catholic Church. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*) *The tabernacle of the sun*:—It was not till the fourth day that God gathered the light together into the sun, and set the sun in heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule the day. Like to this was the course which the same wisdom of God took in manifesting the light of truth, without which there can be no spiritual life or peace or joy. Such is the waywardness of man, that he can turn God's choicest blessings into curses. The darkness was fighting against the light, his sin went well-nigh to choking it. But, in the fulness of time, God gathered the light together, as with the natural sun at the creation, and in His Son, to the end that all might see and know from whence and from whom the true spiritual light came. . . . If there was music in heaven when the Eternal Son left His throne, and departed to clothe himself in the weakness of humanity, what joy there must have been when He returned as conqueror. It was in the heavens that God set a tabernacle for the sun; and so in the heaven of heavens He set a tabernacle for His only-begotten Son. The Gospel, which till His ascension had been like a young half-fledged bird, which never ventured but a few paces from its nest, now suddenly put forth its wings, and flew to and fro over the earth, and ever and anon returned to its ark with an olive-leaf in its mouth, telling that the waters of sin were abating. And as the sun gives not only light but heat, so does Christ soften, melt, and warm the heart by His grace. . . . There are eclipses of the sun; the shadow of the moon comes between the earth and the sun, and cuts off its light. This is like the reason of man. It was intended to give us light, but, like the moon, it can only give light as it reflects light from the sun, Christ. There are many things by which the light of Christ may be eclipsed from us. If we pray to Him diligently and heartily be assured He will not leave us in darkness. (*J. C. Hare.*)

Ver. 6. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.—*The moral uses of the weather*:—1. The contrasts and the changes of the seasons. What a picture of the vicissitudes of human life is in them! The experience of thousands has ranged from the extreme severity of winter's poverty to the scorching blaze of midsummer

prosperity. The man of wealth yesterday has become the beggar of to-day. Such contrasts and changes seem to have been far more numerous of late years than formerly. 2. Doubtless the extremes of heat and cold have their part to play in the beneficent economy of nature; yet no one doubts the physical evils that arise from them. To some, no doubt, the cold of winter seems invigorating and bracing, but to multitudes severity means death. So, too, there may be those to whom poverty and trial are stimulants to patient endurance, and develop some of the nobler qualities of the soul. We question, however, whether those are not the exceptions rather than the rule. Many of those around us are what they are largely because of their surroundings. When a man loses the stimulus of hope it is not very likely that his life will blossom into much moral beauty. We often hear it said, that prosperity is more dangerous to a man's virtues than adversity; but we question whether there is not far more moral evil traceable to human poverty than many well-to-do philosophers are apt to imagine. 3. The poets have been influenced by something more than fancy when they have associated the ideas of cold and death, heat and life. Cold is only a relative term. Heat is essential to life. 4. The sun is the chief source whence heat is derived. The resistless energies of this omnipotent and all-pervading agent are in constant operation. There is not an instant of time that heat is not performing some important duty in fulfilment of the Divine purposes. 5. How dependent we are upon the weather for a bountiful harvest! Every summer brings us within a measurable distance of absolute want. The harvest, at best, does but provide for the wants of the year. It is seemly, then, that we should pray to the Lord of the harvest, that our "garners may be full." Practical lessons—(1) Earthly prosperity may be a legitimate object of desire. There is a cheap affectation of virtue which pretends to despise wealth. (2) Do not overlook the connection between circumstance and condition. (3) Recognise the lesson that spiritual, not less than physical, life, is dependent upon heat. It is so in the individual soul; it is so in the Church. Some men lament their own spiritual deadness, yet never take any steps to increase their store of vital heat. Death is the absence of life; cold is the absence of heat. Nothing can quicken the life of the soul, or produce in us the beauty of holiness, but the direct influence of the Sun of Righteousness. Only as we can get more perfectly into the presence of God, and have our cold natures warmed and our languid pulses quickened by His life, shall we have that for which we yearn. (*F. Wagstaff.*)

Ver. 7. **The law of the Lord is perfect.**—*The best book*:—I would not have you forget the true and proper mission of the Bible,—to reveal saving truth. But it is well to remember that, even as a classic, no book equals the Word of God. The Bible has exercised a remarkable influence in the department of literature. "The English tongue would lose its grandest monument if the works which the Bible has inspired were blotted from it." Religious books, of course, get everything from the Bible; but writers with no distinctly religious object are enormously beholden to its inspiration. There is not a notable book—a book of transcendent genius or power—which has not culled from the Word of God either thought or illustration or telling phrase. We need not, even in an age of advanced education and culture, be ashamed of the Bible. Its study will confer as much credit on our intellect as on our piety. We are not such Bible readers as were our fathers. This is one evil of the multiplication of books. In this generation we are better educated, we know more than our fathers. But have we the same robust and vigorous intellects? It seems to me that there is a deterioration in this respect along with our neglect of Bible study. There are three things which should make the Bible popular among young people—1. Its fervid style. There is not a dull passage, if we except a few chronologies and such like, from Genesis to Revelation. 2. Its exuberance of illustration. It is a book of pictures. 3. Its practical wisdom. If you live seventy years you will not have gathered all the practical wisdom you may learn now from studying the Bible. Do not forget that you may find in the Bible eternal life. (*A. F. Forrest.*) *The Bible a book for all nations*:—Of what is not the Bible the foundation and the inspiration? To what interest of human life does it not give its great benediction? The system of doctrine and duty which the Bible contains is a fixed final system, not a progressive one, and one introductory to a higher, and the Bible will never become obsolete, and will never be supplemented by any other revelation. This proposition has been most flatly contradicted. It is argued that the Bible has accomplished a very good purpose in the world, but it cannot long satisfy the world's need, because it does not keep pace with the world's progress. By and

by we shall need a broader basis on which to construct the religion of the future. A time, it is said, must come when the theological will be too narrow in its range for the demands of the race, and too dogmatic in its tone for the more liberal, general, comprehensive religion of the future. We are invited to mark the universality of this beautiful law of progressive development in nature, in literature, in the fine and in the useful arts, in human laws and institutions. But those who reason thus overlook the distinction between the apparent and the real progress of man. The true progress of man is the progress of man's self, apart from all organisation. Those who eulogise modern progress confine their attention to what man does to promote his convenience and comfort. How absurd it is to mark the progress of a man by that which a man manipulates and moulds and makes subservient to his use ! The Bible is the book for the soul, and God put into it exactly those truths that He knew were calculated to regenerate the soul. Unless the soul needs to be made over, and given new facilities, you do not want a new Bible, or any annex to the old one. There is another great distinction to keep in mind. While the Bible is fixed and will never be supplemented, the principles contained in it are admissible of universal and of endless application, and for that reason the Bible will never need to be supplemented. It is with the Bible as it is with nature. No new laws have been given to nature from the beginning. And yet how constantly are men discovering laws that for long ages were hidden from human eyes : and men of science will tell you that there are now many latent forces in nature awaiting the genius of the occasion when they shall be discovered and applied to the use of man. What the world wants is not a new Bible, or new principles, or new truths, but the recognition of the old, and the legitimate application of the old to the purposes for which they were intended. So when new forms of old errors arise, we do not want a new Bible to find new truths with which to antagonise these old errors. The fact is, there are no new forms of scepticism. We do not need any other Bible, or a supplement to the old, because the Bible is a book that has a friendly voice and a helping hand to every race. Here is a book equally adapted to the Oriental and the Occidental mind ; adapted alike to the Mongolian and the Circassian mind ; adapted to all the different divisions into which society is divided. The Bible is sufficient for the world's need, because it goes down to the very foundation of man's mental and moral structure, and takes hold of that which is sinful in his soul's life. As long as sin and sorrow are in the world, so long will this book take hold of that which is deepest, and truest, and profoundest in the soul's immortal life. And the Bible gives us a perfect ideal in the character of our blessed Saviour. Moreover, we do not need a new Bible, because we do not want any new motives to the practice of the greatest virtue. (*Moses T. Hoge, D.D.*) *The perfect law* :—"The law of the Lord" is the Bible phrase for describing the duty which God requires of man. This law embraces all those principles by which our inward life of disposition and desire and our outward life of word and action ought to be guided. It is an expression of the Divine will respecting human conduct. But perhaps the most correct view of the Moral Law is that contained in a sentence which has often been used in the pulpits of Scotland, "the Law is a transcript of the character of God." Justice and truth and love are the very elements, so to speak, of His own moral being ; they have an inherent rightness, and so, while it is true that they are right because He wills them, a deeper truth is that He wills them because they are right. In other words, while the authority of the law rests upon the Divine will, the law itself has its basis in the Divine nature. The law of the Lord is woven into the very nature of the universe. It is graven in indelible lines on the conscience of man. But we must turn to the Holy Scriptures for the fullest exhibition of the Moral Law. The Bible, however, is not a hand-book of morals after the common style. We do not find in it a systematic exposition of law for national or individual life ; and even those parts of it which, to some extent, have this appearance, come far short of being a full expression of the perfect law. The Mosaic economy, for example, looked at in the light of the higher attainments and the wider wants of Gospel times, is admittedly an imperfect economy on its moral as well as on its ceremonial side. No one would dream of introducing into modern law its enactments respecting (to take a case) usury or divorce. In the same way the moral lessons taught by those histories of nations and individuals of which the Bible is largely composed are often doubtful. All this impresses us with the necessity of some guiding principle to enable us to gather from the rich variety of Holy Scripture the law of God—His will for our guidance. Where, then, shall we go for this guiding and testing principle ? We answer without hesitation—to Jesus Christ Himself. The chief corner-stone of the



Church is also the chief corner-stone of Christian morality. He came "to show us the Father," and so in Him, in His own character and conduct and teaching, we have the clearest and most authoritative revelation of the Father's law. We cannot over-estimate the value of having the law of God exhibited in a life as opposed to any statement of it in words. In the life of our blessed Lord, as recorded in Holy Scripture and interpreted to His followers by the Holy Spirit and by the providence of God, we have the final standard of moral theory and practice. He is the incarnate Law. Having defined what the law of the Lord is, we pass on to see wherein its perfection lies, and for one thing, it exhibits the quality of harmony. Every lover of art knows that the chief excellence of a painting lies in the consistency of its various parts and their subordination to the main design. A similar principle applies to music. What is true of beauty presented to the eye or ear holds good of truth and righteousness, the beauty which the mind only can perceive. The ultimate test of any new doctrine lies in its harmony with those Scripture-sustained convictions which we have already formed. The law of the Lord has this crowning element of perfection—it is a harmonious unity whose parts never jar or clash. Of course, we are quite familiar with the objection that one precept of Holy Scripture sometimes comes into antagonism with other precepts. The obedience which a child owes to God, for example, can only be rendered sometimes by disobedience to a parent whom God has commanded the child to obey. We revert to our definition of the law, and reply that this objection confounds the law which is perfect and eternal with particular commandments which are from the nature of the case inadequate and temporary expressions of the law. The commandment may be inadequate, for it is only the verbal form in which the spiritual principle is clothed, and the letter can never exhaust or completely unfold the spirit. The commandment, moreover, may be only the temporary form of the eternal law. The Decalogue is indispensable on earth, but how many of the relations which it is intended to regulate will have ceased to exist, or be radically changed, in heaven! Thus the particular precepts of the law may be temporary, but the law of the Lord which is perfect abides in all its force wherever intelligent beings are. (*D. M'Kinnon, M.A.*)

*A tribute to the law of God:*—The law is characterised by six names and nine epithets and by nine effects. The names are law, testimony, statutes, commandments, fear, judgments. To it are applied nine epithets, namely, perfect, sure, right, pure, holy, true, righteous, desirable, sweet. To it are ascribed nine effects, namely, it converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, enriches like gold, satisfies like honey, warns against sin, rewards the obedient. The central thought or conception about which all gathers is that of law. There is a profound philosophy in this passage. It presents Jehovah as Lord, *i.e.* "Law-ward," or guardian of law. We are to conceive of God's law as—1. A perfect rule of duty, having a basis of common law beneath all its statutory provisions, an eternal basis of essential right and wrong. "Thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," based upon eternal principles, not upon an arbitrary will. We are to think of this fabric of law as—2. Supported like a grand arch, upon two great pillars: reward and penalty. The whole passage is therefore a challenge to our adoring homage and obedience. 1. The law is a perfect product of infinite wisdom and love, (Rom. vii. 12, 14) "holy, just, good, spiritual." 2. It is enforced by Divine sanctions of reward and penalty, and these are each equally necessary to sustain the law and government of God. The testimonies and the judgment are equally perfect. The love that rewards and the wrath that punishes are equally beautiful and perfect. The transcendent thought of the whole passage is that obedience is a privilege. 1. Law is the voice of love, not simply of authority, therefore only love can truly fulfil. 2. Obedience is self-rewarding and disobedience self-avenging. The general thought of this whole passage is, obedience the highest privilege. 1. The law is the expression of Divine perfection; hence leads to perfection. 2. Of the highest love; hence must be interpreted by love and fulfilled by love. 3. Of the highest bliss—key to blessing; hence the door to promises. 4. "Our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ." Cannot justify, but only conduct to the obedient One who can justify. (*Homiletic Monthly.*)

*The perfect law of God:*—By the law we may understand the entire written Word. I. THE CHARACTER OF THE LAW. Perfect, that is, complete and entire. See the testimony—1. Of Moses (Deut. vi. 6-8). 2. David, throughout the Psalms, as here in our text. 3. Jesus, the Son of God. 4. Paul (1 Tim. iii. 14, 17). 5. Peter. II. ITS EFFECTS. "Converting the soul." Note what conversion is, the great spiritual change in a man's heart. III. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. That it is not enough to have

a mere intellectual acquaintance with the Word of God. 2. The vast criminality of those who would withhold the Word of God from men. 3. How dangerous and wicked to turn from it to the lying fables of deluded or designing men. (*J. Allport.*) *The light of nature*.—It was not in the material heavens, which with all their grandeur the Psalmist had been contemplating, that he found the lesson of perfection. He turned from them to the law of the Lord, and there he found it. With all that the contemplation of nature is able to do, it cannot regenerate the spirit. Neither poetry nor philosophy can help man in the great exigencies of life. None of them can do any good to a dying man. The damps of the sepulchre put out their light. Nor is this to be wondered at. The works of nature were not made to last; hence how can they teach lessons for immortality? They may serve man in many ways here, and aid his piety too, if he be a converted man. But they will never convert him. Man needs the Bible to convert him to God and to fit him to die. This truth has to be insisted on in our day which speaks so much of “the light of nature,” and which subjects the Bible to its pretended discoveries. But we maintain that it is insufficient, and for proof we appeal—I. TO FACT—HISTORY. Glance—1. At the heathen world—the people are in gross darkness. 2. At antiquity—they knew nothing of immortality, or the holiness of God. They never had any natural religion; what they had was all unnatural, monstrous. Reason failed them. They knew nothing certainly, though they made many conjectures; what little light they had came from tradition and through the Jews. II. THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES. These teach that the heavens declare the glory of God, but they do not say that man was ever converted thereby. III. THE INCONCLUSIVENESS OF THE ARGUMENTS EMPLOYED BY THE DISCIPLES OF NATURE. They say, nature teaches the existence of one God. But until the Bible has taught you this you cannot know it. What we see would rather teach that there are two deities, a good and a bad one. And, in fact, without the Bible men never did believe in the unity of God. And so of the Divine attributes. His unchangeableness and goodness, His spirituality and His will, the sanctions of His law and the immortality of the soul. The real utility of all the light of nature on the subject of religion consists in this: that it demonstrates its own insufficiency for teaching us a single important truth, and thus turns us over to the Word of God; and having done so, shines as a constant witness, and everywhere, to impress the lessons of Bible-teaching upon us. It strikes the infidel dumb, and aids the devotions of the Christian, living or dying. But alone it teaches nothing. God never said it could. And its reasonings, proudly called in the schools “science” and “philosophy,” vanish into smoke when we touch them. You will never read God’s word rightly till His Word teaches you how. After it has taught you you may gather proofs of religion from nature which you could not gather before. The lesson is in nature; but nature is a sealed book to a sinner. It may silence a sceptic, it cannot satisfy a soul. She has no Christ to tell of, no atonement, no pardon, no firm foothold on immortal work. She cannot make men wise or good or happy, or inspire with blessed hope. (*T. S. Spencer, D.D.*) **Converting the soul.**—*The restoration of the soul*.—I. WHAT IS HERE MEANT BY CONVERSION? In margin it is rendered “restoring.” This restoring the soul is from its fall in Adam to its salvation in Christ. 1. From the darkness of ignorance to the light of Divine knowledge. Ignorance is general where the means of knowledge are not realised. The light of Divine knowledge, employing and enriching the understanding, is essential to the restoration of the soul. 2. From the oppressive weight of contracted guilt to a state of conscious acceptance with God (Rom. v. 1). 3. From inward depravity, derived from our first parents, to a conformity to the moral image of God. The removal of guilt from the conscience, and the being “sanctified wholly,” are distinct attainments in the Christian life. 4. From a state of misery to the possession of real happiness. How can men but be miserable in sin! II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS RESTORATION IS EFFECTED. By the perfect law of the Lord. For law read doctrine. This doctrine is—1. Divine in its origin. 2. Pure in the means of its communication. 3. Harmonious, and well adapted to the condition of man in all its parts. 4. Energetic in its operations. Improvement,—ministers must understand the doctrine of the Lord before they can make it known to others. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *The Word of God converting the soul*.—The text might be read, “The doctrine of the Lord is perfect restoring the soul.” I. THE SOUL OF MAN IN ITS NATURAL STATE REQUIRES TO BE CONVERTED OR RESTORED. See how abundant is the Scripture testimony to this truth. Even the best men have confessed their need. David says of himself, “Behold, I

was shapen in iniquity," &c. There has been but one bright exception amongst men, and that is "the Man Christ Jesus." He alone "knew no sin." It is the exception which proves the rule. II. BUT MANY TAKE EXCEPTION TO THIS BY DENYING THE FACT OF THE PERVERSION OF THE HUMAN SOUL. "As for God, His way is perfect," as may be clearly seen from those of His works which sin has not depraved. But as for man, Scripture and experience alike attest that he has "corrupted his way." III. BY DENYING THAT MAN'S RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE. But wherefore? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Cannot He who at first made man upright remodel him after His own image? IV. BY DENYING THE ADEQUACY OF THE MEANS OF RECOVERY. It is said the Word of God is not an adequate instrument. But experience has proved the contrary. For the word, or doctrine, of the Lord is perfect, complete. It will never fail of the desired issue in those who come to the study of it in a right spirit. (*Thomas Dale, M.A.*) *The excellency of Holy Scripture*:—There are two methods which God has taken for instructing mankind. He has taught them by the glories of creation and by the words of Holy Scripture. But man as a sinner has no ear to hear the voice of God in His works. It is only by the revealed works of Scripture that he can find the way of pardon and holiness. I. THE EXCELLENT PROPERTIES OF THE WORD OF GOD. As a law it is perfect. Nothing can be added to it, nothing taken from it. It contains all our duty and all our consolation; all that is necessary to make us happy and holy. The writings of the heathen philosophers contain a few mutilated principles and some fine sentiments, but they are not directed to any great end, nor are they complete in themselves. As a testimony the Word of God is sure. Considered as the solemn witness and attestation of God to all those truths which concern man's everlasting salvation, it is sure. It comes with a force and authority to the conscience. It follows that the statutes of the Lord are right. The equity and holiness of them equal their completeness and certainty. They are in all respects true and just and excellent. There is nothing harsh, nothing defiling, nothing erroneous, nothing arbitrary in them. They have not only authority, but goodness on their side. It is a further property of the Word of God that, as a commandment, it is pure. The Bible is a clear and perspicuous rule of duty. Its pure light has no need of proofs, reasonings, evidences, or study. When considered as producing the fear of the Lord it is eternal. The obligations of revealed truth are perpetual. II. THE SURPRISING EFFECTS WHICH THE WORD OF GOD PRODUCES. 1. It converts the soul. This is the first thing the fallen creature needs. Scripture begins, where man's necessities begin, with the heart. It unfolds the depravity of our nature. It exhibits the astonishing scheme of redemption in the death of the incarnate Saviour. 2. After conversion follows joy. 3. The sincere student will advance in knowledge. 4. It induces a holy, reverential fear of God. Impress the high and affectionate regard which we should pay to Holy Scripture. (*Daniel Wilson, M.A.*) *Revelation and conversion*:—Trees are known by their fruit, and books by their effect upon the mind. By the "law of the Lord" David means the whole revelation of God, so far as it had been given in his day. It is equally true of all revelation since. We may judge by its effects upon our own selves. I. THE WORK OF THE WORD OF GOD IN CONVERSION. Not apart from the Spirit, but as it is used by the Spirit, it—1. Convinces men of sin: they see what perfection is, that God demands it and that they are far from it. 2. Drives them from false methods of salvation to bring them to self-despair, and to shut them up to God's method of saving them. 3. Reveals the way of salvation through Christ by faith. 4. Enables the soul to embrace Christ as its all in all, by setting forth promises and invitations which are opened up to the understanding and sealed to the heart. 5. Brings the heart nearer and nearer to God, by awakening love, desire for holiness, &c. 6. Restores the soul when it has wandered, bringing back the tenderness, hope, love, joy, &c., which it had lost. 7. Perfects the nature. The highest flights of holy enjoyment are not above or beyond the Word. II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS WORK. Its operations are altogether good, timed and balanced with infinite discretion. 1. It removes despair without quenching repentance. 2. Gives pardon, but does not create presumption. 3. Gives rest, but excites the soul to progress. 4. Breathes security, but engenders watchfulness. 5. Bestows strength and holiness, but begets no boasting. 6. Gives harmony to duties, emotions, hopes, and enjoyments. 7. Brings the man to live for God and with God, and yet makes him none the less fitted for the daily duties of life. III. THE CONSEQUENT EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD. 1. We need not add to it to secure conversion in any case. 2. We need not keep back any doctrine for fear of



damping the flame of a true revival. 3. We need not extraordinary gifts to preach it, the Word will do its own work. 4. We have but to follow it to be converted, and to keep to it to become truly wise. It fits man's needs as the key the lock. Cling to it, study it, use it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

**Ver. 8. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.**—*Joy in God's statutes.*—Not content with celebrating the eternal fitness and rectitude of the Divine statutes, the Psalmist recommends them by an argument of a less abstract nature, more closely adapted to our feelings and interests, by adding that in consequence of their inherent rectitude they tend to rejoice the heart. The word "statutes" includes the whole system of Divine precepts contained in the Scriptures. Such is the goodness and condescension of God, that with our duty He has strictly connected not only our happiness in general, but even our present pleasure. Two things are necessary in order to produce true and rational joy in the human mind, namely, objects suited to its faculties, and faculties in proper disposition to receive impressions from them. In each of these views the Holy Scriptures, as they contain the Divine laws, are calculated to produce this happy temper. What has here been asserted of all the discoveries and demands of God's revealed will is particularly applicable to its perceptive part, which has a tendency to rejoice the heart of the sincerely pious, in theory, in practice, and on reflection. What further evinces the excellence of the Divine statutes is, that the joy they inspire is pure and unmixed. The religious joy which arises immediately from reflection on a virtuous practice increases the sublime pleasure which springs up in the mind of a good man when he contemplates his relation to his God and Saviour. (*P. C. Sowden.*) *The Bible right.*—Old books go out of date. Whatever they were about, men no longer care for them. Books are human; they have a time to be born, they grow in strength, they have a middle-life of usefulness, then comes old age, they totter and they die. Many of the national libraries are merely the cemeteries of dead books. Some were virtuous, and accomplished a glorious mission. Some went into the ashes through inquisitorial fires. Not so with one old book. It started in the world's infancy. It grew under theocracy and monarchy. It withstood the storms of fire. It grew under the prophet's mantle and under the fisherman's coat of the apostles. In Rome, and Ephesus, and Jerusalem, and Patmos tyranny issued edicts against it, and infidelity put out the tongue, and the papacy from its monasteries, and Mohammedanism from its mosques, hurled their anathemas; but the old Bible lived. It came across the British Channel and was greeted by Wycliff and James I. It came across the Atlantic and struck Plymouth Rock, until, like that of Horeb, it gushed with blessedness. Churches and asylums have gathered all along its way, ringing their bells, and stretching out their hands of blessing. But it will not have accomplished its mission until it has climbed the icy mountains of Greenland, until it has gone over the granite cliffs of China, until it has thrown its glow amid the Australian mines, until it has scattered its gems among the diamond districts of Brazil, and all thrones shall be gathered into one throne, and all crowns by the fires of revolution shall be melted into one crown, and this Book shall at the very gate of heaven have waved in the ransomed empires—not until then will that glorious Bible have accomplished its mission. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The Bible right.*—I. THE BIBLE IS RIGHT IN ITS AUTHENTICATION. I say, if the Bible had been an imposition; if it had not been written by the men who said they wrote it; if it had been a mere collection of falsehoods, it would have been scouted by everybody. If that book has come down through the centuries without a scar, it is because there is nothing in it disturable. When men began their opposition to it there were two or three thousand copies; now there are two hundred millions, so far as I can calculate. Would that have been so had it been an imposture? Further, suppose there was a great pestilence, and hundreds of thousands of men were dying of that pestilence, and some one should find a medicine that in one day cured ten thousand people, would not all men say that was a good medicine? But just so it has been with the Bible. It has cured men of the worst leprosy, the leprosy of sin. Modern discoveries in Petra, Nineveh, Palestine have all gone to prove its truth. II. THE BIBLE IS RIGHT IN STYLE. I know there are a great many people who think it is merely a collection of genealogical tables and dry facts. That is because they do not know how to read the Book. You take up the most interesting novel that was ever written, and if you commence at the four hundredth page to-day, and to-morrow at the three hundredth, and the next day at the first page, how much sense or

interest would you gather from it? Yet that is the very process to which the Bible is subjected every day. An angel from heaven reading the Bible in that way could not understand it. The Bible, like all other palaces, has a door by which to enter and a door by which to go out. Genesis is the door to go in, and Revelation the door to go out. These Epistles of Paul the Apostle are merely letters written, folded up, and sent by postmen to the different Churches. Do you read other letters the way you read Paul's letters? Suppose you get a business letter, and you know that in it there are important financial propositions, do you read the last page first and then one line of the third page, and another of the second, and another of the first? Besides that, people read the Bible when they cannot do anything else. It is a dark day and they do not feel well, and they do not go to business, and after lounging about awhile they pick up the Bible—their mind refuses to enjoy the truth. Or they come home weary from the store or shop, and they feel, if they do not say, it is a dull book. While the Bible is to be read on stormy days, and while your head aches, it is also to be read in the sunshine and when your nerves, like harp-strings, thrum the song of health. While your vision is clear, walk in this paradise of truth; and while your mental appetite is good, pluck these clusters of grace. Note its conciseness. Every word is packed full of truth. Nine-tenths of all the good literature of this age is merely the Bible diluted. See also its variety; not contradiction or collision, but variety. Just as in the song, you have the basso and alto, and soprano and tenor—they are not in collision with each other, but come in to make up the harmony—so it is in this book, there are different parts of this great song of redemption. The prophet comes and takes one part, and the patriarch another, and the evangelist another, and the apostles another, and yet they all come into the grand harmony—the song of “Moses and the Lamb.” God prepared it for all zones—arctic and tropics, as well as the temperate zone. The Arabian would read it on his dromedary, and the Laplander seated on the swift sledge, and the herdsman of Holland, guarding the cattle in the grass, and the Swiss girl, reclining amid Alpine crags. Thus suited to all is it, and hence I cannot help saying, The statutes of the Lord are right. III. AND THE BIBLE IS RIGHT IN ITS DOCTRINES. Man, a sinner; Christ, a Saviour—the two doctrines. All the mountains of the Bible bow down to Calvary. IV. AND IN ITS EFFECTS. I do not care where you put the Bible, it just suits the place. Whether in the hands of a man seeking salvation, or one discouraged, or one in trouble, or one bereaved—it is the grand catholicon for them all. Father and mother, take down that long-neglected Bible. Where is it now? Is it in the trunk, or on the upper shelf, or is it in the room in the house where you seldom go save when you have company, and then not to read the Bible? In the name of the God who will judge the quick and the dead, and by the interests of your immortal soul and the souls of your children, I charge you to-day to take up that old Bible, open it, read for your own life, and read for the life of your children. How can you go out on the dark mountains of death, and take your children along with you, when you have such a glorious lamp to guide you? Put that Bible on every rail-train, until all the dark places of our land are illuminated by it. Put it on every ship that crosses the sea, until the dark homes of heathenism get the light. While I speak, there comes to us the horrid yell of heathen worship, and in the face of this day's sun gushed the blood of human sacrifice. Give them the Bible. Tell them, “God so loved the world that He gave,” &c. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The Word of God rejoicing the heart:—*I. THE STATUTES OF GOD ARE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS DUTY, or the means of grace. They are rules of life and action relating, first, to our communion with God, our religious service; and then, to our intercourse with one another. And they are “right” in many different senses—counteracting the tendency of man's sinful heart, supplying a stimulant to duty; right, too, in their operation and in their consequences, both as to this world and the next. What they engage to do they accomplish. Infidelity can make no such boast. II. THEY REJOICE THE HEART. 1. What is rejoicing, the joy of the heart? We should base it upon natural affection, mutual harmony and confidence, rendering and receiving to and from all what is due. It operates in the home, and amongst our neighbours, and throughout society. Such are a happy people. 2. And the statutes of the Lord do effect this; hence God's statutes have been our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. (*Thomas Dale, M.A.*) *The Bible always right:—*If my compass always points to the north I know how to use it; but if it veers to other points of the compass, and I am to judge out of my own mind whether it is right or not, I may as well be without the thing as with it. If my Bible is right always, it

will lead me right ; and as I believe it is, so I shall follow it and find the truth.

*A wrong and a right standard.*—It is stated that when the United States Government's dock at Brooklyn was finished, on inspecting it, it was found to be two feet too short to take in the vessels which needed repairs. This involved a reconstruction of the work at great expense. How it occurred was a mystery, but it appeared on investigation that the contractor, in making his measurements, used a tape-line which was a fraction of an inch too short. Either it had shrunk, or it was imperfectly made at first ; in some way the tape was too short, and so the dock was too short also. The importance of a correct standard can hardly be exaggerated. Whether it be a standard of weights, measures, values, or moral qualities, a slight variation from that which is right and true produces disastrous results.

*The Bible right, the reader may be wrong.*—As a mirage is mistaken for a reality, because of the effect of the sun's rays upon the organs of vision ; so with those that are detecting flaws in the Bible. It is because the eye is diseased, and sees double where the object is single. The fault is in the eye, not in the Bible.

**The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.**—*The spiritual nature and enlightening efficacy of the moral law.*—The purity of the law, if there were no other evidence, is sufficient to establish the fact, that it is the commandment of the Lord. We wish to set before you the moral law in its essential and Divine purity. During the patriarchal ages there was no written document bearing the sanction of a Divine moral law. Tradition, so long as man is either fallible or fallacious, cannot possibly, for any length of time, form a channel for truth. By and by it pleased God to inscribe with His own finger upon tablets of stone the substance of those floating intimations which He had made from time to time to His servants of old. The law was ordained for something beyond the mere curbing of transgressions ; its further object was to detect, expose, and condemn the transgressing principle ; in other words, by the purity which it developed and enforced to enlighten man's eyes upon the character of God, the extent of his own moral ruin, and the absolute necessity of the restoration of the moral principle. The human soul never was suffered to lose an intuitive sense of the simple fact that there is a God ; but having assented to this simple fact, the human mind, by its own light, made no further progress towards the discovery of the Divine character. We attribute this failure to moral rather than physical causes. The intellect was not so much in fault as the heart. Man's favourite sins were thought by him not only to experience the Divine toleration, but even to form no insignificant elements in the Divine character, so that he had nothing to do but to turn over the records of the pagan theology, whensoever he wished to place some act of crime under the protection and the patronage of the god of lust, or fraud, or violence. It was in order to afford some remedy for this dreadful evil—in order to vindicate His own character as well as to elevate that of His creatures, that God published His moral law. The tenor of the law proclaimed at once the high strain of moral perfection belonging by right of nature to the God with whom we have to do. But does man like these ordinances ? Do these definitions of duty suit his feelings ? If he confess the truth he will confess that he hates such instruction. Many, however, even with the law of God in their hands, are never brought to this confession. They have not been led to see the mighty moral difference between the mind that originated and the minds that received the law. This comes of carelessness and prejudice. Upon the careless generalising of human with Divine systems of law the whole mistake hinges about Christian morals. But human laws only touch actions. Divine laws touch morals, that is, touch motive and action in conjunction. Therefore I am a transgressor of Divine laws if motive as well as action do not tender homage and obedience. Bring human perfection, of whatever nature, side by side with the perfection of the moral law, and of the first the end appears at once. The law shows us our moral ruin, our spiritual death. But "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (*T. E. Hankinson, M.A.*)

Ver. 9. **The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever.**—*The Word of God enduring for ever.*—We are to consider the abiding and habitual effect of the Word of God upon believing hearts. And this effect is expressed in this phrase, "the fear of the Lord." Note what is said of it. I. IT IS CLEAN—ITS PURITY. It is so, because it is the only true and sound basis of a due social regard to man, and the only valid bond of union, whether domestic, private, or public. Every believer ought to bear witness to the cleansing, purifying power of the fear of the Lord.

II. ITS PERPETUITY—"enduring for ever." This tells of the effect of the principle



rather than of the principle itself, though this latter is not to be omitted. But in its effects it is consistent, unswerving, abiding, all-powerful. It enters into the man, and goes with him wherever he goes. He cannot and would not shake it off. And its effects are eternal, they can never pass away. And all may possess it, through Christ. It shall be for your peace here and happiness hereafter. (*Thomas Dale, M.A.*) **The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.**—*The Word of God altogether true and righteous*.—I. CONSIDER THESE JUDGMENTS AS MATTERS OF FACT. Take—1. The expulsion of our first parents from Eden. None can understand why God created man capable of falling, and foreknowing that he would fall. But this does not say that God made him on purpose that he should fall. This would be to assume that we know all God's purpose in creating man, which we do not. We cannot reconcile the supremacy of God and the free agency of man. It is of no use to attempt to be "wise above what is written," but our duty is to take man as he is—capable of understanding and obeying God's command, which Adam unquestionably was. There was in him no moral difficulty as in us, since the imagination of his heart was not, as ours, "evil continually." We must deplore the instability of the man, but we cannot on that account take exception to the judgments of the Lord. And the transmission to offspring of the properties of the parent—this law had been ordained before this fatal event, and what right have we to think that He who made all things "very good" should remodel or reverse His laws in consequence of that event? Hence, although "in Adam all die," was it unrighteous in God to act in accordance with His own previously established law? Adam himself caused, of his own choice, that it should work ill to him and his. But are we to blame God for that? 2. The judgment upon Cain. Surely this was far less than he deserved. And the gate of mercy and of grace was not closed upon him. 3. The deluge, the overthrow of Jerusalem, and many others. In reference to each of these we might prove it to be "altogether righteous." For by righteous we understand perfect consistency with previous revelations given by God—with the laws enacted and bearing on each case, and with the penalties threatened by God and consciously incurred by man. And when men object to these judgments they do not attempt to justify the conduct of the sinner, but only to condemn the law under which, and the Judge by whom, he was condemned. They affirm that God is without compassion for human frailty, and without consideration for human folly. II. AS MATTERS OF FAITH—they are altogether true. Necessarily, many of the judgments of God are matters of faith. For the interpositions of God, though sometimes seen in the crisis and agony of nations, are, in the case of individuals, scarcely, if at all, discernible. III. IN THEIR BEARING UPON OURSELVES. As we cannot impeach God's righteousness in His judgments in the past, can we, in what we expect in the future, doubt His truth? Meantime "the victory that overcometh the world is this, even our faith." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 10. **More to be desired are they than gold.**—*The Holy Scriptures*.—I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. None are ignorant of the value of money. Money gives access to every other possession. Point out the vanity of riches. They cannot benefit the possessor beyond this life. They are unsatisfying in their nature. The attainment of them is only within the reach of a few in every community. And they bring temptations to sin. Then, is not the Word of God more to be desired than gold? II. THE WAY TO KNOW THE VALUE OF SCRIPTURE, AND TO TASTE ITS SWEETNESS. Many are but formal readers. To read aright, you must be renewed in the spirit of your minds. There must be a Divine illumination. Pray more for the Spirit's influence. If we would understand the value of the Scriptures, we shall find it useful to reflect upon their designs and our circumstances. And we must read them with patient perseverance. (*Carus Wilson.*) *The Bible valued above all else*.—On yon stormy shore, where, amid the wreck the night had wrought, and the waves, still thundering as they sullenly retire, had left on the beach, lies the naked form of a drowned sailor boy. He had stripped for one last, brave fight for life, and wears nought but a handkerchief bound round his cold breast. Insensible to pity, and unawed by the presence of death, those who sought the wreck, as vultures swoop down on their prey, rushed on the body, and tore away the handkerchief—tore it open, certain that it held within its folds gold, his little fortune, something very valuable for a man in such an hour to say, I'll sink or swim with it. They were right. But it was not gold. It was the poor lad's Bible—also a parting gift, and the more precious that

it was a mother's. *The priceless worth of the Bible*:—A Christian soldier told us of a comrade who called the Bible "his Klondyke," and, as samples of what he called "good lumps of gold," gave us Psa. xci. 15. "I will answer him. I will be with him . . . I will deliver him . . . satisfy him, and show him My salvation." Let us put in for a claim in this Klondyke, and dig for its hid treasures. *The excellence of the Scriptures*:—I. THE IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES WHICH THE SCRIPTURES CONTAIN. They make known to us the glory of the invisible God, as a pure and perfect Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. An explicit revelation of His will to man, and of the manner in which He requires to be worshipped and served. Here is discovered to us our once innocent and exalted, but now guilty and fallen, state. Here is made known to us the way of salvation, by which we may be restored to the favour, the image, and the enjoyment of God. II. THE EFFECTS WHICH THEY PRODUCE UPON THE CONDITION OF MANKIND. Even in respect of outward civilisation much advantage has arisen to the world from the introduction of the Scriptures. Even where they are not attended with saving efficacy they are often seen to produce a considerable influence upon the external manners, and sometimes too upon the inward dispositions of men. But the transcendent excellence of the Scriptures is peculiarly manifested in their efficacy, when accompanied with the influence of Divine grace. The Scriptures are the means of spiritual illumination, of conversion and regeneration, of sanctification and a meetness for eternal life. III. THE ADMIRABLE ADAPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES TO THE VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES OF MEN. Here is something suited to every rank and every age. The Scriptures set forth a perfect rule of duty, with which no system of heathen morality is once to be compared, and they exhibit incitements and encouragements, as well as examples of holiness, which are nowhere else to be found. Their excellency is especially seen in their tendency and efficacy to afford consolation in time of trouble and in the prospect of death. Lessons—1. Admire the distinguishing goodness of God toward us. 2. Diligently use God's gift. 3. Recognise the obligation to circulate the Scriptures among our fellow-men. (*D. Dickson.*) *Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*.—*The Bible sweeter than honey*:—Among the insects which subsist on the sweet sap of flowers there are two very different classes. One is remarkable for its imposing plumage, which shows in the sunbeams like the dust of gems; and as you watch its jaunty gyrations over the fields, and its minuet dance from flower to flower, you cannot help admiring its graceful activity. In the same field there is another worker, whose brown vest and straightforward flight may not have arrested your eye. His fluttering neighbour darts down here and there, and sips elegantly wherever he can find a drop of ready nectar; but this dingy plodder makes a point of alighting everywhere, and wherever he alights he either finds honey or makes it. What is the end? The one died last October along with the flower; the other is warm in his hive to-night, amidst the fragrant stores which he gathered beneath the bright beams of summer. Honey is the sweetest of all substances, and the ancients, who were unacquainted with sugar, attached even more importance to it than we do. "A land flowing with milk and honey" presented the very strongest attractions to the Oriental taste. The idea conveyed by the text is this: that the truth of God, as revealed to us in the Bible, affords more real pleasure to the soul than that which epicures consider the most desirable luxury does to the palate. In that remarkable book, *The Eclipse of Faith*, there is a chapter entitled "The Blank Bible," in which the author describes a dream, wherein he fancied that on taking up his Greek Testament one morning, to read his accustomed chapter, the old familiar volume seemed to be a total blank. Supposing that some book like it had, by accident, got into its place, he did not stop to hunt it up, but took down a large copy of the Bible, and this, to his amazement, proved also to be a blank from beginning to end. While musing on this unaccountable phenomenon, his servant came in and said that thieves must have been in the house during the night, since her Bible had been carried off, and another volume of the same size, but containing but blank paper, had been left in its place. The dreamer then went forth into the street, and heard a similar report from all whom he met. It was curious to observe the different effects of this calamity on the various characters whom he encountered. An interest, almost universal, was now felt for a book which had hitherto been sadly undervalued. Some to whom their Bible had been a "blank" book for twenty years, and who would never have known whether it was full or empty but for the lamentations of their neighbours, were among the loudest in their expressions of sorrow. In marked contrast with these was the sincere regret of an aged

woman, long kept a prisoner in her narrow chamber by sickness, and to whom the Bible had been, as to so many thousands more, her faithful companion in solitude. I found her gazing intently on the blank Bible (says our author), which had been so recently bright to her with the lustre of immortal hopes. She burst into tears as she saw me. "And has your faith left you too, my gentle friend?" said I. "No," she answered; "and I trust it never will. He who has taken away the Bible has not taken away my memory, and I now recall all that is most precious in that book which has so long been my meditation. I think I can say that I loved it more than any possession on earth." Even the warnings of the Bible are wholesome for us, for by them we are made to know our own evil. Merle d'Aubigné, during a visit to England, related an incident which happened in 1855, in connection with the circulation of the Bible among soldiers. A colporteur reached Toulon just as the French troops were embarking for the Crimea. He offered a Testament to a soldier, who asked what book it was. "The Word of God," was the answer. "Let me have it, then," said the man; and when he had received it he added most irreverently, "it will do very well to light my pipe." The colporteur felt sorry that a book which might have been of service to somebody had been thus thrown away; but there was no help for it, and he went his way. About a year later he happened to be in the interior of France, and took lodging at an inn, where he found the family in great distress, from the recent death of a son. The poor mother explained that the young man had been wounded in the Crimean War, and had only been able to reach home to die. "I have much consolation," she added; "he was so peaceful and happy, and he brought comfort to his father and to me." "How was this?" asked the colporteur. "Oh," she said, "he found all his comfort in one little book, which he had always with him." So saying, she showed him a soiled copy of the New Testament (the very one which he himself had given to the reckless young soldier), and read on the inside of the cover, "Received at Toulon (with the date), despised, neglected, read, believed, and found salvation." "Sweeter than honey" are these Divine oracles of God, and "in keeping of them there is great reward." (*Anon.*)

Ver. 11. **By them is Thy servant warned.**—*Scripture warnings*.—We are not to confuse the imperfections of religious professors with the unchangeable sovereignty of the Divine laws. I. CALL ATTENTION TO SOME OF THEM THUS CONNECTED WITH OUR OWN HISTORY, and the warnings they give. 1. Those which relate to the heart of man. We are told its deceitful character. 2. Examples in human character. They, as well as the words of Scripture, warn us against sin. 3. Those that come from the truth of eternity and of judgment to come. II. THE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE. 1. It is present in the conscience; and 2. Prospective, in heaven. 3. And it is great in comparison with our deserts. 4. And in obedience itself there is great reward. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *Bible warnings*.—At Tramore, near Waterford, a place where the Atlantic breakers dash with sublime fury against the rocks, there are on the headlands three towers, and on the middle one stands what is called "The Metal Man." This is a figure made of metal, and painted to resemble a sailor. With his finger he points to some very dangerous rocks that are to be shunned. There are rocks in life's troublesome sea that are ready to shipwreck the bodies and souls of the young. **In keeping of them there is great reward.**—*The reward of keeping God's commandments*.—In this Psalm David speaks of the two great books by which God administers instruction. The volume of nature. The volume of inspiration. Having enlarged on the excellent properties and glorious effects of the Divine Word, he illustrates its value by a comparison with the things of this world, by the results of his experience, and the infinite advantage connected with the observance of it. David possessed, in the Scriptures then extant, an abstract of all those glorious truths revealed to ourselves, and an abstract of sufficient clearness to guide him to God, to peace, to holiness, to heaven. The possession of the Scriptures, however, is not sufficient to bring the soul to God. These statutes must be kept as well as possessed, for it is in keeping them that there is great reward. The book not only supplies ideas, it also raises the character of the humble student. The Scripture is a book of privileges. There is not a Christian but is entitled to all the clustering promises which grow on this tree of life. Practice is necessary to complete our duty to the Scriptures. All religion hinges upon this point. The Psalmist says, "In keeping of them there is great reward." Reward is that which is earned by an equivalent, or that which is a suitable recompense for the action performed. But the reward of observing the Word of God is not merely a conse-



quence, neither is it earned by what can be claimed as an equivalent. They are rewards of grace, both in this life and in the future life. (*T. Kennion, M.A.*)

*The advantages of religion to particular persons:—*I. RELIGION CONDUCTETH TO THE HAPPINESS OF THIS LIFE. 1. As to the mind; to be pious and religious brings a double advantage to the mind of man. It tends to the improvement of our understandings. It raises and enlarges the minds of men, and makes them more capable of true knowledge. It improves the understandings of men by subduing their lusts and moderating their passions. Intemperance, sensuality, and fleshly lusts debase men's minds. Religion purifies and refines our spirits. Freedom from irregular passions doth not only signify that a man is wise, but really contributes to the making of him such. Religion also tends to the ease and pleasure, the peace and tranquillity, of our minds. This is the natural fruit of a religious and virtuous course of life. Religion contributes to our peace, by allaying those passions which are apt to ruffle and discompose our spirits; and by freeing us from the anxieties of guilt and the fears of Divine wrath and displeasure. 2. Religion also tends to the happiness of the outward man. The blessings of this kind respect our health, or estate, or reputation, or relations. II. RELIGION CONDUCTETH TO THE ETERNAL HAPPINESS AND SALVATION OF MEN IN THE OTHER WORLD. The consideration of future happiness is our most powerful motive. How religion conduces to happiness in the new life is seen from—1. The promises of God; and 2. From the nature of the thing. It is a necessary disposition and preparation of us for that future life. When all is done there is no man can serve his own interest better than by serving God. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*) *On the pleasures of religion:—*“What is the chief good?” was the great inquiry of the ancient schools; and the different answers to this question formed the principal distinctions amongst the various sects of philosophy. Happiness is the end of all the pursuits of men; it is the object of all their sighs. Yet are they almost always disappointed in the means which are taken to obtain it. They follow the dictates of their passions. And it is not till after they have sought it in vain through every form of false pleasure that they come at length to find it, where alone reason and religion have concurred to place it, in obedience to God and a life of virtue. Here the anxious mind finds a calm and settled peace which it had not known, and which it could not know amid the agitations of the world. I purpose, in this discourse, to confine my view to the internal comforts that flow from religion. It offers the highest satisfactions to the mind; it yields the purest pleasures to the heart; it introduces serenity and peace into the breast; and finally, it affords a source of happiness which is always within our power, which is secure from the vicissitudes of life, and which shall be eternal. (*S.S. Smith, D.D.*) *The advantages of a religious life:—*Compare this text with the saying of Paul, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable.” Where, then, is the present reward of keeping God's commandments? There might be a reward hereafter; how could there be one now? What are we to say to this apparent contradiction? St. Paul was supposing a case; we must ascertain what his supposition was not, and what it was. Take a man whose whole soul was in his religion, who upheld himself in every trial by the consolations of the blessed hope. He has staked everything on the truth, and having surmounted a thousand obstacles and made his way through a thousand foes, and offered his body on the altar of the living God, he is pressing on with rejoicing and elevated spirit. Tell him that there is no resurrection, and no hope in Christ for an after-state of being, and what then? That man would be most miserable if he took into his heart your message. You may say that in shutting out the future we still leave the present; but the present is the foretaste of the future. In cutting off the streams you destroy the fountain. If such a man were told that after fighting through life he would be vanquished in death, what would be left him of gladness? Who, then, shall rival the Christian in misery if, after setting out in the expectation of a blessed immortality, he discovers that only in this life is there hope in Christ? Our object has been to show that there is nothing in the quoted words of St. Paul which militates against the fact alleged in our text, and in other parts of Scripture, that, in respect of present happiness—happiness during this life—the godly have the advantage over the ungodly. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*)

*Immediate reward of obedience:—*You will observe the Psalmist does not say *after*, but *in* the keeping of the commandments there is great reward. That reward is the pleasure which lies in God's service now, not in the payment which is judiciously made for it afterwards; just as the eye is regaled in the instant by sights of beauty, or the ear by the melody which falls upon it. I. WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS OF

THE PRESENT REWARD? 1. There is the happiness that flows direct from the sense of doing or having done what is right. The testimony of a good conscience. There is a felt and present solace in the taste of that hidden manna which it administers. 2. The affections of the heart which prompt to obedience. For love, whether it be towards God or towards men, is blessed. In its play and exercise there is instantaneous joy; there is delight in the original conceptions of benevolence, and delight also in its outgoings, whilst malignity, envy, and anger do but rankle the bosom. And we can confidently appeal, even to ungodly men, for the truth that in the grovelling pursuits, whether of sense or avarice, they never experienced so true a delight as in those moments when their spirit was touched into sympathy with other spirits than their own. And not only of love, but of all the other virtues, the same can be said. They one and all of them yield an immediate satisfaction to the wearer. The moralities of the human character are what make up the happiness and harmony of the soul. They are the very streams of that well which, struck out in the bosom of regenerated man, spring up there into life everlasting. II. THE ADVANTAGE OF THE REWARD BEING IN, AND NOT AFTER, THE KEEPING OF THE COMMANDMENTS. Suppose it had been after, and quite distinct from that enjoyment of which we have spoken, and which lies directly and essentially in the obedience itself. This can easily be imagined—a heaven of gratification to the senses as a reward for holiness. Virtue then would be so much work for so much wages; heaven would not be looked for as a place of holiness, but as the price that is given for it. The candidates of immortality would be so many labourers for hire. And it would be no evidence at all of the love which you have for a work, that you have a love for its wages. It makes all the difference whether or no we love our work. Sordidness and sacredness are not wider apart. This is so in common and ordinary work. How much more when it is the service of God that is in question! III. HOW THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AFFECTS THIS QUESTION. 1. It releases you altogether from the law as a covenant. It tells you that you are not to work for heaven, because that heaven is secured to you in another way. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We could never pay for it, and therefore God gives it to us. And how blessed this is even for our characters as the subject of God's will. The old economy of "do this and live" makes up the very spirit of bondage, and of low mercenary bargaining. With the fears of legality, the sordidness of legality is sure to make entrance again into the heart. Hence the only access to a sinner's heart for the love of holiness in itself is by making him the free offer of heaven as an unconditional gift, and at the same time making him understand that it is, in truth, holiness and nothing else which forms the very essence of heaven's blessedness. These are the things which constitute the difference between the real and the formal Christian. The inferior creatures may be dealt with by terror or by joy as well as he; his very obedience may proceed from the earthliness of his disposition. Much of the Christian may be put on; but the question is, if you delight in the law of God after the inner man, or whether you obey it because of consequences? Whether you are allured to holiness by the beauty of its graces, or by the bribery of its gains? Surely there is nothing noble in him who labours for the reward that comes *after* keeping the commandments, and thinks not of the "great reward" that comes "in keeping the commandments." (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.—*The tenacity and sophistry of sin:*—The vulgar vices reappear subtly disguised in cultured circles. The grossness of the vices has been purged, but the viciousness is not extinct. Is there not something like this in the saintly life as compared with the old life? All the vices to which the soul is heir strive to reassert themselves in the Christian believer, and too often succeed in disturbing his peace and injuring his character. They are not now gross, offensive, violent; they are smooth and subtle, filmy and tenuous; they may even fail to provoke the notice and criticism of those who know us best. Yet we recognise in them, through their profoundest disguises, the deadly vices which, seen in their nakedness, all men loathe. All the bad passions insinuate themselves into our life unless we steadily detect and reject them. Anger, covetousness, indulgence, pride, self-will, vanity, all these motions and outgoings of unrighteousness are ever striving to assert themselves in the Christian soul and life. The tenacity of sin is marvellous, so is its sophistry. These evil thoughts and imaginations of the saintly heart may appear faint and inoffensive sins when compared with the crimson transgressions of the actual world; but the true disciple will not think so, nor will he treat them tenderly.

The desires, weaknesses, and sins of the natural life are greatly diminished in the spiritual life; they have altogether lost their alarming aspect; their capacious jaws seem no longer fringed with teeth; but they are none the less of the breed of monsters, and we must show them no mercy. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Self-ignorance:*—There is no kind of knowledge which it is so important for a man to possess as knowledge of himself. No man can be blind to himself without sooner or later having to pay serious penalty for such blindness. The best of the ancients regarded self-knowledge as the very beginning of wisdom, just as they regarded self-mastery as the very beginning of practical virtue. It is said that Socrates, on one occasion, excused himself from giving attention to some important questions, on the ground that he could not possibly come to know such things, as he had not yet been able to know himself. There, the grand old heathen felt, was the true starting-place of all true knowledge. Wisdom, like charity, began at home. There are few things, judging at first sight, of which a man might be supposed to have fuller and more accurate knowledge, than he has of his own mind and character. The subject of study is always within his reach. To avoid self-thought is impossible. To the great majority of men the subject is one of perennial and engrossing interest. Nature has so ordained it that, in many important respects, the object of greatest concern to every one of us is himself. History may be a blank to a man, science a name, literature and art dark and mysterious as the grave; but himself!—here surely the man is at home, or he is at home nowhere. The Psalmist, however, is of a widely different opinion. Of course, a certain amount of self-knowledge is thrust upon us all. Much ignorance of self, too, is corrected by our contact with men and things. Many a false and foolish notion is thus ruthlessly swept away as the years pass on. Life and God are great teachers; and, unless a man be a hopeless fool, they compel him to learn something of himself. Still, the exclamation of the Psalmist hits off an universal fact. "Who can understand his errors?" There is a touch of pensive surprise in the words, as if he had just had an unwonted revelation of himself, as if he had just made discovery of faults and sins hitherto hidden from him. He had no idea that there was so much lingering mischief within. He is not quite sure that he has seen the worst yet. By "secret faults" the Psalmist does not mean guilty things, that is, things of actual wickedness done in secret. Open transgression is the path of death. Secret transgression is more deadly still. By "secret faults" he means faults hidden away, not from others, but from ourselves. And it is more than probable that such "faults" exist in all of us. It is no uncommon thing to see a man blind as a bat to some infirmity of temper, some coarseness of manner, some infatuation or rooted prejudice, conspicuous as the sun at noonday to his friends, and not quite so pleasant! Another evidence of this lack of self-knowledge is to be found in the grave discoveries we sometimes make of our actual character and condition. The matter is sometimes brought home to us by the faithfulness of a friend. It may come through the home-thrust of an enemy. Our hope is in God. The head need not have turned grey before we discover that, in a world like this, "it is not in man to order his steps aright." Happy he who once and forever abandons the fruitless task, finds his way to a Saviour's side, shelters beneath the Rock that is higher than he. (*J. Thew.*) *The difficulty of understanding our errors:*—At this point the Psalmist pauses. He has been looking at his life in the light of the holy law, and, realising how full of imperfection it was, he resumes again in a penitential strain, "Who can understand his errors?" There is not only the acknowledgment that life is full of error; there is corruption at the very spring of life. He also acknowledges the difficulty of understanding our errors. Sin destroys the power by which we detect it. It creates a false standard, by which we judge ourselves. There is a personal touch in this acknowledgment. "Who can understand his own errors?" The sinner is sometimes sharp in discerning the errors of other people, although blind to his own. Thus it was with David himself. We are all too ready to acknowledge sin in a general way, without trying to note the particular sins we are most guilty of. There follows the prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." These include—1. Faults unknown to ourselves. If we are trying to follow Christ, and live a straight and honest and pure life, we find difficulties at every turn. Temptations are strewn thickly around on every path. Unknown sins are the most dangerous to the soul. Sins noted and marked upon our memories are less likely to be ruinous to the soul than those secret sins which elude the observation. 2. Faults known to ourselves, but known only to ourselves. Each lives three lives: the life by which we are known to the world, the life by which we are known to our household, and the life known only



to ourselves. All sins are, to a certain extent, presumptuous. Sins of presumption, properly speaking, are sins of will, knowingly and wilfully committed. It is a sin of presumption to act as if we needed no mercy. (*T. Somerville, M.A.*) *The deceitfulness of sin*.—The sense of sin, the joy of pardon, and the yearning for goodness are essential features in the religion of Christ. If the sense of sin gives the deepest pain, the joy of pardon is the sweetest joy. The thought of the Psalmist in this passage is the difficulty for each man of understanding his sins. Error means straying, wandering from the path. There are sins of ignorance and of infirmity, unconsciously, unintentionally done through lack of self-knowledge, or of zealous vigilance against the deceits of the world and the snares of Satan. There are also sins of presumption, done with deliberateness and hardened pride and a sort of insolence against God. There are also sins which do not usually come earliest in the moral history, but which are the inevitable result and penalty of sins of carelessness and infirmity; and which imply, nay, sooner or later create, that awful insensibility which is the sure symptom of spiritual death, and for which no forgiveness, because no repentance, is possible. The sinfulness of sin consists in its being done against the majesty and holiness, and authority and love, of God. The more we know of God the more shall we feel the depravity, the wickedness of sin. The incessancy of it is a very painful and humbling, but incontestable truth. Our sins of omission, which perhaps come most home to us in the riper years of the Christian life; the sins of commission, in which we actually violate the law of God—were they to be brought up against us at the end of a single day, might turn our hair white with shame and sorrow. Its deceitfulness is one of its most malignant and dangerous features. To call good evil is not to make it evil, and to call evil good is not to make it good. Yet we love to have it so, and God answers us according to the multitude of our idols. Nevertheless, when the moral sense is darkened it is on the way to be extinguished. How then shall we keep alive in our hearts the instinct of righteousness, and the sorrowful consciousness of having come short of it? This Psalm shows us that the key of the secret, and the instrument for each of us to use, is the Word of God. 1. Would we feel about sin as God would have us feel, let us pray earnestly and constantly for the Holy Spirit. 2. Let us be on our guard against an artificial, hysterical, self-inspecting, pusillanimous remorse. Let penitence come rather through the habitual contemplation of God in Christ, than by swelling the swamps of our own corrupt nature. 3. The sense of sin, if we would avoid unreality and a sort of complacency in our humbleness, should ever be accompanied with a continuous and strenuous effort to overcome it. 4. St. Paul never forgot his past. We need not forget that we have sinned, if only we have cause to believe that we are forgiven. We may be perfectly clean, though imperfectly holy. (*Bishop Thorold.*) *A man's errors*.—1. Man's ignorance of himself is the result of man's ignorance of God; and the knowledge of God comprehends the knowledge of man. If a man would "understand his errors," he must first know Him who can forgive, correct, and prevent them. A capacity of spiritual discernment is essential to man's knowledge of himself. 2. Man's knowledge of his ignorance is the first stage in his educational progress towards the possession of wisdom, and the first expression of that knowledge is prayer. 3. A tendency to err in thought, in word, and in action, combined with the inherent deceitfulness of sin, is the secret of the unfathomable mystery of human error,—unfathomable, that is, by any sounding-line of mere human intellect or human conscience. A tendency to err produces error. A biassed ball cannot run straight. The deceitfulness of sin, however, rather than this tendency, is the preponderating element in the unknowableness of one's own errors. Sin usually wears a disguise, and often a man does not know his own sin. The sinful heart is a cunning logician. 4. To "understand one's errors," one must know the fact of the universal defilement of sin consequent upon the fall. 5. The "errors" of a man include "secret faults" and "presumptuous sins." To sin knowingly is to sin presumptuously. A secret fault is one unknown to others or ourselves—to either or to both. It is a mockery for a man who has not searched himself to ask God to search him. 6. All true wisdom, possessed or attainable by any one of the human race on earth, involves constant self-scrutiny and constant prayer. Men must be advised to look both within and without. It is because we look within that we also look without. 7. All true wisdom is increasing wisdom, for it involves increasing sanctification, and included in sanctification is the joy of a heavenly fellowship. (*T. Easton.*) *The searching power of God's law*.—Notice David's holy perplexity. 1. The occasion of it. David was now looking into the law of

God, and a beam of that light had darted into his conscience. The Word of God has a secret, unavoidable power upon the soul to convince it of sin. In the Scripture is presented a transcendent rule of holiness, the infinite purity and sanctity which is in God Himself. The soul, seeing this, is at once convinced of infinite impurity. In Scripture there is an exact rule of holiness prescribed. The law forbids all sin, and enjoins all holiness. It is a spiritual rule, not resting only in an outward conformity. It keeps secret thoughts under awe. The law of God is operative, not as a dead letter: it has an active power to work upon the heart. The Spirit of God goes along with it, and makes it quick, and powerful, and sharp, and mighty in operation. As to the—2. Nature and purpose of David's perplexity; it may be resolved into these three expressions. (1) It is the speech of a man who confesses his ignorance; he knows not his errors. (2) It is the speech of him who sees many errors in himself, and suspects more, and is astonished at the consideration of them. (3) He utters his thoughts with a sighing accent, and groans within himself at the sense of them. As to the matter of this question, take it thus—Who understands the nature of all his actions, whether they be erroneous or not? Or thus—Who ever yet kept such a careful account in his conscience as to register the just number of his sins? Or thus—Who understands the many aggravations that may make a seemingly small sin out of measure sinful? What is the ground whence arises this difficulty of discerning errors? Chiefly from these three. The Divine excellency of the law of God. The marvellous subtlety and closeness of man's spirit. The falsehood of Satan, his depths of deceitfulness. Use the subject for conviction, and for consolation. (*Bishop Browning.*) *Knowledge of one's sins:—*

I. TO ACQUIRE A KNOWLEDGE OF OUR SINFULNESS IS EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT. This may be inferred from the fact that very few acquire this knowledge, and that none acquire it perfectly. We learn, both from observation and from the Scriptures, that of those sins of the heart, in which men's errors or sinfulness principally consist in the sight of God, they are all by nature entirely ignorant. Men will not come to the Saviour because they do not feel their need of Him. It is difficult to get a knowledge of our sin, for the influences of the Divine Spirit are represented as necessary to communicate this knowledge. But it would be needless to convince men of sin if they were not ignorant of their sins. Mankind are so blind to their own sinfulness, so ignorant of their true characters, that the Spirit of God alone can remove this blindness. II. SHOW WHY IT IS SO. 1. Because men are ignorant of the Divine law. By the law is the knowledge of sin. St. John says, sin is a deviation from the law. But mankind are naturally ignorant of the Divine law. They are alive without the law. He who would understand his errors must understand the Divine law. 2. Another cause is the nature of the human mind. It is like the eye which, while it perceives other objects, cannot see itself (save in a mirror). Men find it difficult to examine themselves. 3. Another cause is the prevalence of self-love. Every man is extremely partial in judging himself, and exceedingly unwilling to discover his own faults. 4. The deceitfulness of sin is another cause. 5. Another is the effects which sin produces upon men's understandings and consciences. These faculties are the eyes of the soul, without which he can discern nothing. Just so far as sin prevails in the heart and life, so far it puts out or darkens these eyes of the mind with respect to all spiritual objects; so that the more sinful a man really is, so much the less sinful does he appear to himself to be. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

*Self-ignorance:—*It is no supposition, but an unquestionable fact, that to not a few of us, from the first moment of existence, there has been present, not beneath the roof but within the breast, a mysterious resident, an inseparable companion, nearer to us than friend or brother, yet of whom, after all, we know little or nothing. Many are the reasons why we should be acquainted with our moral nature. Other portions of self-knowledge we may with comparative harmlessness neglect, but to neglect this is full of peril. And we can never depute the work to another. Unnoticed error in the heart, unlike intellectual deficiencies, not merely affects our temporal condition or our social reputation, but may issue in our eternal ruin. Yet a man's moral defects are most likely to elude his own scrutiny. There is a peculiar secrecy, an inherent inscrutability, about our sins. It is the peculiar characteristic of moral disease, that it does its deadly work in secret. Sin is a malady which affects the very organ by which itself is detected. One reason why the sinful man does not understand his errors is—I. THAT SIN CAN BE TRULY MEASURED ONLY WHEN IT IS RESISTED. So long as evil reigns unopposed within it will reign in a great degree unobserved. Resistance is the best measure of force. Sin's power is revealed only in the act of resistance. When the softening

principle of Divine love and grace begins to thaw the icy coldness of a godless heart, then it is that the soul becomes aware of the deadly strength of sin. Then comes the feeling of an hitherto unrealised burden. II. SIN OFTEN MAKES A MAN AFRAID TO KNOW HIMSELF. A man often has a latent misgiving that all is not right with his soul, yet, fearing to know the whole truth, he will inquire no further. Most men prefer the delicious tranquillity of ignorance to the wholesome pains of a self-revelation. Easily alarmed in other cases, men become strangely incurious here. With many, life is but a continuous endeavour to forget and keep out of sight their true selves. III. THE SLOW AND GRADUAL WAY IN WHICH, IN MOST CASES, SINFUL HABITS AND DISPOSITIONS ARE ACQUIRED. There is something in the mere fact of the gradual and insidious way in which changes of character generally take place, that tends to blind men to their own defects. Every one knows how unconscious we often are of changes that occur by minute and slow degrees, as in the case of the seasons. How imperceptibly life's advancing stages steal upon us! Analogous changes equally unnoted, because equally slow and gradual, may be occurring in our moral nature, in the state of our souls before God. Character is a thing of slow formation. Each day helps to mould it. In a thousand insignificant sacrifices of principle to passion, of duty to inclination, a man's moral being has been fashioned into the shape it wears. IV. AS CHARACTER GRADUALLY DETERIORATES, THERE IS A PARALLEL DETERIORATION OF THE STANDARD BY WHICH WE JUDGE IT. As sin grows, conscience declines in vigour, and partakes of the general injury which sin inflicts on the soul. Sin, in many of its forms, has an ugly look at first, but its repulsiveness rapidly wears off by familiarity. The danger of self-ignorance is not less than its guilt. Of all evils a secret evil is most to be deprecated,—of all enemies a concealed enemy is the worst. However alarming, however distressing self-knowledge may be, better that than the tremendous evils of self-ignorance. (*Principal Caird, D.D.*) *Sin unmeasurable*:—What we know is as nothing compared with what we do not know. This is true of our errors. I. EXPLAIN THE QUESTION. We all own that we have errors, but who of us can understand them? They mingle with our good, and we cannot detect them so as to separate them. And this not only in our feelings, but in our actions. And their number, guilt, aggravation—who can understand this? Let each one think of his own errors and their peculiar wickedness. II. IMPRESS IT ON THE HEART. In order to a man's understanding his errors he must understand the mystery of—1. The fall. Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil; yet who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron? Now your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers; your sins the sparks. If you could count them (which you cannot do), yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities—eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your souls. And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and centre we should find it as fully permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rottenness. The fact is, that man is a reeking mass of corruption. His whole soul is by nature so debased and so depraved that no description which can be given of him even by inspired tongues can fully tell how base and vile a thing he is. 2. God's law especially in its spiritual application. It is exceeding broad. 3. The perfection of God. 4. Hell. 5. The Cross. George Herbert saith very sweetly—"He that would know sin, let him repair to Olivet, and he shall see a Man so wrung with pain that all His head, His hair, His garments bloody be. Sin was that press and vice which forced pain to hunt its cruel food through every vein." You must see Christ sweating, as it were, great drops of blood. You must drink of the cup to its last dregs, and like Jesus cry—"It is finished," or else we cannot know the guilt of our sin. III. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION. 1. The folly of hoping for salvation by our own righteousness. 2. Or by our feelings. 3. What grace is this which pardons sin! Blessed be God, the spotless flood of Jesus' merit is deeper than the height of mine iniquities. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The soul's error*:—"Error," what a word, what a thing! It is the foundation-stone of Satan's kingdom in the world; ay, and by it he builds up and sustains his empire in the world. Two things are suggested here concerning the soul's errors—I. THEY ARE MYSTERIOUS. "Who can understand his errors?" 1. They are mysterious in their origin. Who can explain the genesis of error? 2. They are mysterious in their number. Who can count them? They baffle all human arithmetic. 3. They are mysterious in their work-



ing. How wondrously they work! 4. They are mysterious in their influence. Who shall tell the influence of one error, on one individual, on society, on the universe? II. **THEY ARE POLLUTING.** "Cleanse Thou me." Errors stain the conscience and the heart, they are moral filth. 1. The cleansing of the soul from error is a work of supreme urgency. "Cleanse Thou me." Without this cleansing there can be no true liberty, dignity, or happiness, no fellowship with God, no heaven. 2. The cleansing of the soul from error is the work of God. "Cleanse Thou me." We cannot cleanse ourselves, though our agency in the matter is indispensable. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (*Homilist.*)

*The difficulty of attaining to a knowledge of our sin:*—We have here a question put, and a prayer offered. But the implied answer to the question must be taken with some limitations; for—

I. **SOME KNOWLEDGE OF ONE'S ERRORS IS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.** Such as—1. Will awaken the soul of man. 2. Drive him out of all the refuges of lies to which he will betake himself for salvation. 3. Convince him that he is utterly helpless and deserves to perish. 4. Make him come to Christ and accept the Gospel. But, when men are brought to all this, then they ask—

II. **WHO CAN UNDERSTAND HIS ERRORS?** For—1. He cannot understand the errors that he knows—their nature, their variety, their number, their aggravation, their demerit. 2. Of many of his errors he has no knowledge at all. See how long men remain in sin and are not disturbed by it. Conclusion: How humbled should we be. How forbearing is God. How precious Christ's redemption. How mighty the work of the Holy Spirit. How thorough in its working true faith is. But how little of it there is. (*J. R. Anderson.*)

*Self-knowledge:*—The foundation of all spiritual wisdom must be laid in self-knowledge. Yet men neither desire nor seek such knowledge. There is nothing that they desire less. Yet without there can be no true religion. The form may be maintained but the power will be unknown. But the good man will seek this knowledge, though he will not fully attain it.

I. **THE HUMILIATING CONFESSION IMPLIED IN THE PSALMIST'S QUESTION.** It is implied that no man can understand his errors. And reasons for this are—1. The infinite purity of God's law, surpassing our comprehension. 2. Self-love, which makes him tender and partial in estimating his own faults. 3. The impossibility of recollecting every instance, even of undoubted transgression. They are so many, so varied, so secret.

II. **THE HUMBLE PETITION WHICH FOLLOWS THIS CONFESSION.** David knew that none of his sins were hidden from God, though they might be from himself. And he knew that they defiled and polluted his soul. Hence his prayer. It is the blood of Jesus Christ which alone can cleanse us. Turn, therefore, in confession and penitence to Him. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*)

*Difficulty of knowing our faults:*—A small portion of light, it is said, only serves to render darkness more visible; so, when the light of truth begins to penetrate the mind, it shows that there is within us a dark abyss; and every additional ray discovers more of the intricate windings of the human heart. For there is not only dense darkness, but many false and deceitful appearances which turn out upon investigation very different from what they seemed to be. David felt this, and hence our text.

I. **INQUIRE WHY IT IS SO DIFFICULT TO KNOW OUR OWN FAULTS.** We may know an act to be a sin, and yet not know all the moral evil that is in it. But—1. One reason why we know so little of ourselves is, that so few reflect. 2. Another is, our thoughts are so fugitive. 3. Our feelings are so mixed as to their character. 4. Pride and self-love. 5. Our dislike of that which excites, as our sins do—painful feelings. Remorse is an intolerable pain. And so is the "looking for of judgment." 6. We judge ourselves by the flatteries of others; 7. And by the ordinary conduct of men. 8. Failure to apply to ourselves the true standard of rectitude. "I was alive without the law once." How, then, ought we to watch our hearts and continually seek the grace of God.

II. **THE IMPORT OF THIS PRAYER.** It is for deliverance not only from known, but from hidden sins also. And there is a twofold cleansing—1. That of expiation. 2. That of sanctification. Not only do we need pardon, but the continual purification of our souls. Conclusion—1. The best evidence of the existence of a holy nature is the sincere and prevailing desire of perfect holiness. A gracious state is not proved by the persuasion that we have attained it, but by the ardent, habitual desire after it. 3. When on account of sin the conscience is again burdened, we must turn again to the blood of Christ. 4. Remember many of our sins are hidden, but they lead on to presumptuous sins. (*A. Alexander, D.D.*)

*The heart's ignorance of itself:*—I. **THE QUESTION.** "Who can understand his errors?" "Error" is one of the mildest words we use to describe wrong-doing. Sin,

guilt, wickedness, iniquity, seem to be terms that carry heavy blame along with them; but when we say of a man merely that he is "in error," we consider we are speaking leniently. And yet "error" really conveys, perhaps, a clearer idea of what sin in its essence is than any of the other words. For what is error but the straying out of a path, the wandering from a way? There is no better definition of sin. The soul has a way, a path, designed for it, just as a planet has an orbit. The difference between the star and the soul is, that the one keeps to its appointed course while the other wanders; but when we ask why this is so, when we try to find out the cause of such unlikeness of behaviour, we touch one of the deepest senses in which it is possible to ask the question, Who can understand his errors? 1. Who can understand error as such? Why should that be true of the human soul which is true of nothing else that is or lives, so far as we know, namely, that it is able to break the law? 2. Who can understand his errors, in the sense of understanding the way in which the principle of sin works in the heart, and manifests itself in the life? (1) How often men, in the bitterness of their souls, cry, What can have possessed me that I should have said or done thus or so? They cannot imagine their true selves having said or done the thing, and so they fall back upon the fancy that some other being came in and took unrightful possession of the conscience, usurped it, thus making possible that which would have been impossible had the lawful sovereign continued on the throne. But this only shows how little we know ourselves, how hard it is for us to understand our errors. (2) When we take into account hereditary tendencies and dispositions, when we consider how much easier it is for one person to resist the temptation to intemperance, or violence of speech, than for another, the problem becomes still more complicated. (3) Letting go the past altogether, when we try to distinguish between the various sources from which, and channels through which, our temptations approach us, how embarrassed we find ourselves. We are conscious that some of our temptations come directly through the channels of sense; we see that others, such as the allurements of ambition and the attractions of praise, touch us from the side of "the world," so-called, or society; while of still others we can only say that they either originate in our own spirits or else are communicated by contact with other spirits, of whose nearness at this time or that we are ignorant. Yet when we have conceded the justice of this analysis, it remains exceedingly difficult to decide, in any given instance, from which one of the three possible sources the temptation which happens for the moment to be pressing us with its vehement appeals has come. It is a point in favour of a beleaguered army if the general in command only knows on which side to anticipate the next attack, but where there is uncertainty about this, or what is worse, where there is the fear that the assault may come from all quarters at once, there must be corresponding loss of heart. II. THE PRAYER. "Cleanse Thou me," &c. Here is the help, just here. Invite the Saviour of the soul to enter in through the gateway of the soul, and to take up His dwelling there. There is no one who comprehends a piece of mechanism so well as the inventor and the maker of it. You may call this a rough figure of speech, and yet, up to a certain point, it is a just one. The soul is, indeed, something much better than a watch; but still the watch and the soul have this much at least in common: each has had a maker, and it is only reasonable to say that no one can possibly understand the thing made so thoroughly as the one who made it. But note carefully the precise point where the soul has the advantage of the watch. It is here; the watchmaker touches the wheels and springs from without. He handles them with most marvellous dexterity, to be sure, but still, after all, it is only handling. The Maker of the soul can do more than handle His workmanship. He has the added power of entering in and dwelling within it, yes, actually within it, as intimately as the life-power dwells within the very juices of the plant, making it lily or carnation, anemone or violet, each after its kind. Those cures are the most effectual that heal the man from within. Surface remedies are proverbially disappointing. Defects of constitution, deeply concealed flaws of nature, yield only to healing forces that, like an atmosphere breathed in, penetrate to the very inmost sources of life. It is so with the secret faults, the hidden flecks, the unnoticed weaknesses which mar the wholeness and sap the strength of the spiritual man. We need to breathe in more of God if we would breathe out more of goodness. We need to have within our veins and bounding in our pulses more of the blood of Christ if we would have the blood of Christ save us indeed, for it is not by an outward washing that God is making ready a people for Himself, but by that inward cleansing which begins at the heart. (*W. R. Huntington, D.D.*)

*Errors*.—By errors he means his unwitting and inconsiderate mistakes. There

are sins, some which are committed when the sun shines, *i.e.* with light and knowledge, and then, as it is with colours when the sun shines, you may see them, so these a man can see and know, and confess them particularly to be transgressions: there are other sins, which are committed either in the times of ignorance or else (if there be knowledge) yet with inobservance: either of these may be so heaped up in the particular number of them that, as a man did (when he did commit them), take no notice of them, so now after the commission, if he should take the brightest candle to search all the records of his soul, yet many of them would escape his notice. And, indeed, this is a great part of our misery, that we cannot understand all our debts: we can easily see too many, yet many more, lie as it were dead, and out of sight; to sin is one great misery, and then to forget our sins is a misery too: if in repentance we could set the battle in array, point to every individual sin, in the true and particular times of acting and re-acting, oh how would our hearts be more broken with shame and sorrow, and how would we adore the richness of the treasure of mercy which must have a multitude in it, to pardon the multitude of our infinite errors and sins. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Errors discovered to the heart:*—Nevertheless, though David saith, Who can understand his errors? as the prophet Jeremiah spake also, The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it? yet must we bestir ourselves at heaven to get more and more heavenly light to find out more and more of our sinnings: so the Lord can search the heart; and though we shall never be able to find out all our sins which we have committed, yet it is possible, and beneficial, for us to find out yet more sins than yet we do know: and you shall find these in your own experience, that as soon as ever grace entered your hearts you saw sin in another way than ever you saw it before, yea, and the more grace hath traversed and increased in the soul, the more full discoveries hath it made of sins: it hath shewn new sins as it were, new sins, not for their being, not as if they were not in the heart and life before, but for their evidence, and our apprehension and feeling: we do now see such ways and such inclinations to be sinful which we did not think to be so before: as physis brings those humours, which had their residence before, now more to the sense of the patient: or as the sun makes open the motes of dust which were in the room before, so doth the light of the Word discover more corruption. (*Ibid.*) *Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*—*Secret faults:*—Temptation comes to all men everywhere, and St. Bernard roundly says, “All life is a temptation,” which means that it is a history of attacks and resistances, victories and defeats, in spiritual things. How could we ever expect to hear the praise, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” if we had gained no victories over self? And how shall we gain them without effort? Temptation has various sources—our own weakness, Satan’s plots, and God’s purposes. Examination shows that temptation is allowed for in God’s plan. Still, we are not to think God is Himself the author of temptation. The fact is, temptation has different meanings and objects, according to the different sources from which it comes. It was from mere malignity Satan tempted Job. It was from party-spirit and self-sufficiency the lawyers questioned Christ, tempting Him. It is from coveting that those who would be rich fall into temptations; but when God allows us to be tempted, His trials are for our good, to disclose our weakness, to increase our strength, to rebuke our waywardness, or bring back our wandering steps. Even in their falls God’s love pursues and overtakes His children. The first thing for us to do is to discover what is our temptation and our tempter. There are inveterate habits of thought, speech, and conduct which are chronic temptations one has hardly a knowledge of, and no will to resist. And here, in these, are the great battlefields for us; and the discovery of these to us is a special occasion of God’s grace to us. When you have found out your special sin, the next thing is to enter the lists against it in a solemn way, a solemn and prepared way. We want the Holy Spirit’s help to know what cannot otherwise be known, the sin which doth most easily beset us. This is to be prayed for, and waited for, and worked for, and part of the prayer must be the attitude of the praying life, a watching soul, a secretly self-questioning soul, a retirement into a sort of inner oratory in one’s own self, there expecting and asking that God may show us ourselves, and enable us to discover, judge, and disapprove ourselves. (*T. F. Crosse, D.C.L.*) *Secret sins:*—In the Lateran council of the Church of Rome a decree was passed that every true believer must confess his sins, all of them, once a year to the priest, and they affixed to it this declaration, that there is no hope, else, of pardon being obtained. How absurd. Can a man tell his sins as easily as he can count his fingers? If we had eyes like those of God we should think very differently of ourselves. The sins that



we see and confess are but like the farmer's small samples which he brings to market when he has left his granary full at home. Let all know that sin is sin, whether we see it or not : though secret to us, it is as truly sin as if we had known it to be so, though not so great as a presumptuous sin. But we want to speak to those whose sins are not unknown to themselves, but still are secret from their fellow-men. Every now and then we turn up a fair stone which lies upon the green mound of the professing Church, surrounded with the verdure of apparent goodness, and we are astonished to find beneath it all kinds of filthy insects and loathsome reptiles. But that would not be just. Let me speak to you who break God's covenant in the dark and wear a mask of goodness in the light, who shut the doors and sin in secret. I. WHAT FOLLY YOU ARE GUILTY OF. It is not secret, it is known. God knows it. This world is like the glass hives wherein bees sometimes work : we look down upon them, and we see all the operations of the little creatures. So God looketh down and seeth all. II. THE MISERY OF SECRET SINS. They who commit them are in constant fear of discovery. If I must be a wicked man, give me the life of a roystering sinner, who sins before the face of day : let me not act as a hypocrite and a coward. A mere profession is but painted pageantry to go to hell in, the funeral array of dead souls ; guilt is a "grim chamberlain," even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at. III. ITS SOLEMN GUILT. You do not think there is any evil in a thing unless somebody sees it, do you ? If somebody did see, then there would be evil. But to play a trick and never be discovered, as we do in trade, that is all fair. I do not believe that. A railway servant puts up a wrong signal, there is an accident, the man is tried and punished. He did the same thing the day before, but there was no accident, and so no one accused him. But it was just the same ; the accident did not make the guilt, but the deed. It was his business to have taken care. Secret sin is the worst of sin, because in his heart the man is an atheist. IV. THE DANGER OF SECRET SIN. It will grow into a public one. You cannot preserve moderation in sin. The melting of the lower glacier in the Alps is always followed by that of the higher. When you begin to sin you go on. Christians, you dare not spare these secret sins ; you must destroy them. V. I BESEECH YOU GIVE THEM UP. You who are almost persuaded to be a Christian. Will you have your sin and go to hell, or leave your sin and go to heaven ? Some say, "You are too precise." Will you say that to God at the last ? Secret sinner, in the great day of judgment what will become of thee ? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The cry from the chasm* :—The Tay Bridge fell because of "secret faults"—a few little blisters on a girder or two. David fell through "secret faults." Three lives we live, concentric circles they are, within one another, connected yet separate. 1. The outside life, in society, among our fellow-men. This outside life, comparing with the other inner lives, is lived with a dangerous facility. Society life is lived very easily. And yet it may be one seething mass of rottenness and hypocrisy. Yes, this outside life is easily lived, profession easily made, and easily and spotlessly acted up to, and because of that we find this prayer of the Psalmist does not refer in particular to this outmost circle, although, of course, to this outmost circle all the eddying movements for fouler or cleaner must in time extend. 2. An inner life we live when the door flings to its hinges on the world, the life in our home-group, in our family circle. Here we manage to raise a little the society mask ; we can almost lift it up and lay it down, and let our eyes look on our real selves. Our surroundings at home are more favourable to the revealing of our true character. The inspection of our home privacy is prejudiced in our favour. But here again there is a Pinchbeck imitation. A saint abroad, they say, may be a devil at home ; true, but a devil abroad may be a saint at home. And a saint abroad and a saint at home too may be a devil at heart. The whole rôle of the saint we can easily act to minutest detail as a member or office-bearer of the Church, and the "pious fraud" can be carried through without a hitch in our home-circle. The imitation may defy detection from the search of the strongest household microscopes. 3. The inmost life, the region of David's prayer for cleansing, is heart-life. Into this privacy not another being is admitted. Here is solitude unbroken. If unbosom we would, we could not. God has walled round the spirit-world with the walls unclimbable and unwingable. Nobody knows but Jesus—the battles of the soul, the halting, the stumbling, the fainting, the falling, the fleeing, the thoughts hard, the thoughts bad, the thoughts harsh and hateful, the temptings, the struggles, the sins, the uncleanness—the black poisoned streams pouring from the old death-jets of the fountain day by day. Why does David pray for cleansing ? What is prayer ?

It is the appeal to power from powerlessness, the strong cry from helplessness to help. Here in this inmost life faults are truly "secret"—secret from the man himself. That is the hidden plague-spot, and well may we wince when we touch the place. We cannot play the hypocrite here. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." No mask here. Entirely helpless; if we seek cleansing, we must get it outside ourselves. For it we must pray to God. Why, O burdened psalmist heart, needest thou pray for cleansing of secret faults? In most folk's vocabulary "secret" is comfortable, quieting, secure, and safe. Well dost thou know that faults secret to others, and secret to thee, are not secret to God. The prayer is from David's helplessness before the secret faults of his own soul; but the agonising timbre of the petition is from the overpowering sense of this inward depravity and corruption, secret and unknown to him, yet spread out in a terrible roll before Him who cannot look upon the shadow of sin. This staggering thought is one reason for the earnestness of this prayer. (*J. Robertson.*)

*Secret faults:*—The Psalmist is thinking of the errors that we don't understand, and of which we are not conscious. 1. There are faults which are secret, because they are bound up with our dispositions and characters. We see every day how blind men become to their own habitual faults. 2. There are secret faults which are due to the influence of our surroundings. There is a law known to naturalists as the law of protective colouring, according to which animals grow into the likeness of their environment. There is such a law in society. Human beings tend to assimilate themselves to the customs and opinions of the world around them. In the business world men do, without hesitation, what they could not do if they applied the law of Christ to the regulation of their daily calling. The society in which we live affects us. It tends to bring us down to its level, and imbues us with its opinions. 3. There are secret faults which consist of undeveloped germs and possibilities of evil that lie lurking in our hearts. How are we to be delivered from these secret faults? 1. Set about the work of self-examination. Careful and judicious self-examination lies at the bottom of all progressive Christianity. It may be done in a morbid, introspective way, but it need not be. 2. We must apply ourselves to the study of the Word of God. 3. We should bring ourselves into the holy presence of Jesus Christ. 4. We must learn to pray the Psalmist's prayer. We cannot cleanse ourselves, we need to be cleansed. Christ must live in us by His Holy Spirit if we are to be cleansed from our secret faults, and to become pure even as He is pure. (*J. C. Lambert.*)

*Secret faults:*—Unless we have some just idea of our hearts and of sin we can have no right idea of a Moral Governor, a Saviour, or a Sanctifier. Self-knowledge is at the root of all real religious knowledge. Self-knowledge admits of degrees. No one, perhaps, is entirely ignorant of himself. Most men are contented with a slight acquaintance with their hearts, and therefore a superficial faith. Men are satisfied to have numberless secret faults. They do not think about them either as sins or as obstacles to strength of faith, and live on as if they had nothing to learn. 1. A ready method of convincing ourselves of the existence in us of faults unknown to ourselves is to consider how plainly we see the secret faults of others. 2. Now reflect on the actual disclosures of our hidden weakness, which accidents occasion. Integrity on one side of our character is no voucher for integrity on another. We cannot tell how we should act if brought under temptations different from those which we have hitherto experienced. 3. This much we cannot but allow; that we do not know ourselves in those respects in which we have not been tried. But further than this: What if we do not know ourselves even where we have been tried, and found faithful? The recorded errors of Scripture saints occurred in those parts of their duty in which they showed obedience most perfect. 4. Think of this too: No one begins to examine himself, and to pray to know himself, but he finds within him an abundance of faults which before were either entirely, or almost entirely, unknown to him. That this is so we learn from the written lives of good men, and our own experience of others. And hence it is that our best men are ever the most humble. 5. But let a man persevere in prayer and watchfulness to the day of his death, yet he will never get to the bottom of his heart. Though he know more and more of himself as he becomes more conscientious and earnest, still the full manifestation of the secrets there lodged is reserved for another world. Call to mind the impediments that are in the way of your knowing yourselves or feeling your ignorance. 1. Self-knowledge does not come as a matter of course; it implies an effort and a work. The very effort of steadily reflecting is painful to some men, not to speak of the difficulty of reflecting correctly. 2. Then comes in our self-love. We hope the best; this saves us the trouble of examining. Self-love answers for

our safety. 3. This favourable judgment of ourselves will especially prevail if we have the misfortune to have uninterrupted health and high spirits and domestic comfort. 4. Next consider the force of habit. Conscience at first warns us against sin; but if we disregard it, it soon ceases to upbraid us; and thus sins, once known, in time become secret sins. 5. To the force of habit must be added that of custom. Every age has its own wrong ways. 6. What is our chief guide amid the evil and seducing customs of the world? Obviously the Bible. These remarks may serve to impress upon us the difficulty of knowing ourselves aright, and the consequent danger to which we are exposed of speaking peace to our souls when there is no peace. Without self-knowledge you have no root in yourselves personally; you may endure for a time, but under affliction or persecution your faith will not last. (J. H. Newman, B.D.)

*Concealing faults:*—Various causes contribute to conceal from a man his faults. I. A DEFECT OF KNOWLEDGE. Many sin against God without being conscious of it. Where ignorance is unavoidable there sin may be excusable; but a man who would avail himself of this plea must make it appear that his ignorance was not owing to any want of care on his part to find out the law. One principal cause that our sins are so much concealed from our view is, that we form our standard of what is right, not from the pure and holy law of God, but from the general opinion of our fellow-sinners. The custom of the world is our guide. II. THE WANT OF A RIGHT DISPOSITION OF MIND. While we were flattering our pride with the hope of having done everything right, we may have deceived ourselves in the very idea of right. The want of right dispositions is a subject little considered. We are often under the influence of desires and tempers positively evil, without knowing it, through the deceitfulness of sin and of our own hearts. Consider this subject as the means of rendering us humble. And let it make us watchful. (Christian Observer.)

*Secret faults:*—Look at this twofold deliverance asked for—grace to cleanse from secret or presumptuous faults. All sins come under the category of secret sins, or those of presumption. The conscience of David was becoming more sensitive; secret sins could be secret no longer. We may perhaps compare that development of moral sensitiveness which the law is always promoting within every right-minded man with those advances of physical science by which unknown worlds above and beneath us have been brought into view, and disease detected in stages in which its presence was unsuspected by our forefathers. A century ago man's observations had not got very far beyond the range of his unassisted senses. Our astronomers have scarcely completed the sum of the stars brought into view by the newest telescopes. The biologist has discovered just as many new worlds as the student of the heavens. He finds sphere of marvellous life within sphere, and yet other spheres more deeply hidden within these, like ball within ivory ball in Oriental carving. An Italian doctor brings his microscope to bear, and, floating within a foot of the soil of the Campagna, finds the malignant bacillus which is at the root of the malarial fever of Rome. Our forefathers knew only the superficial facts of disease, corruption, decay. The biologist brings his concentrated lenses and his polarised light to bear, and he watches every movement of the tiny armies of iconoclasts as they undermine and break up the structure of the body at points where the ordinary observer did not suspect their presence. He projects an electric beam through tubes filled with stifled air, and the air is found to teem with spores that are undeveloped epidemics, with potentialities of world-wide disaster in them. Within recent times we have heard of the elaboration of instruments that may reveal new worlds of sound to us, as marvellous as the worlds of form revealed by the microscope. It is said that no man ever knows what his own voice is like till he hears it in Mr. Edison's phonograph. We are told of another instrument by which the breathings of insects are made audible. The medical expert may yet be able to detect the faintest murmur of abnormal sound in the system that indicates the approach of disease. And in the same way there must be the growth within us of a fine moral science, that will bring home to our apprehension the most obscure of our secret faults. But of all the sciences it is the most primitive and the most neglected. All that we should know is known to the Searcher of our heart long before we become conscious of it. He not only detects the flagrant faults, but the hidden blight that poisons the vitality of religion. But how can there be responsibility for sins of which we are ignorant? And how can there be guilt without responsibility? If ignorance is fated and inevitable, there can be no responsibility. But ignorance is often self-caused. Many of our sins are secret because we insist upon judging ourselves by human rather than Divine standards of life and righteousness. Our sins assume



popular forms and ramifications. No more striking illustration of what the naturalists call the "law of protective colouring" can be found than that which presents itself in the realm of ethics. You know what that law is. The arctic fox, it is said, assumes a white fur in the winter months, so that it may pass undetected over the snows. When the spring comes and the brown earth reappears, it sheds those white hairs and assumes a fur the colour of the earth over which it moves. Many fishes have markings that resemble the sand or gravel above which they make their haunts. You may watch for hours, and till they move you are unable to recognise their presence. The bird that broods on an exposed nest is never gaily coloured. However bright the plumage of its mate, it is always attired in feathers that match its surroundings, if it has to fulfil these dangerous domestic duties. Large numbers of insects are so tinted as to be scarcely distinguishable from the leaves and flowers amidst which they live. One insect has the power of assuming the appearance of a dried twig. And is there not something very much like this in the sphere of human conduct? Our sins blend with the idiosyncrasies of the age and disguise themselves. Of course, we do not sin in loud, flashing colours, if we make any pretension to piety at least. Our sins always perfectly compose with the background of our surroundings. As a rule, they are sins into which we fall in common with men we esteem, men who have established a hold upon our affections, men whose sagacity we trust, and who by their excellence in some things lead us to think very lightly of the moral errors they illustrate in other things. Oh, the blinding tendency of this judgment by popular standards to which we are so prone! All this was sure to be illustrated in the history of the Psalmist. In the rough and tumble of his wandering life and coarse associations he would be prone to forget the inner and more delicate meanings and obligations of the law. The moral atmosphere pervading the Cave of Adullam was not more wholesome than that pervading our unreformed bankruptcy courts. The cave was not the best possible place in which to school a man in the finer shades of right and wrong. Most of David's sins in after life seem to have been lurid reflections of the brutality, the unthinking ruthlessness, the impetuous animalisms of his former companions in arms. He evidently felt the danger he was in of falling to the level of his surroundings and of forgetting by how much he had fallen. Let us beware of gliding into an unconfessed habit of testing ourselves by human standards, when God has given to us higher and holier standards by which to measure ourselves. It is said that all organic germs cease a few miles out at sea. Air taken from the streets or the warehouses of the city yields large numbers of these germs. The air circulating through the ship in dock is charged with them. After the shore has been left behind the air taken from the deck is pure, but they are still found in air taken from the hold. After a few days at sea the air on deck and in the hold alike yields no traces of these microscopic spores that are closely connected with disease. Let us be ever breathing the spirit of God's love. Let us get away from the din and dust and turmoil of life, out upon that infinite sea of love that is without length or breadth or depth, and our secret faults will vanish away and we shall by and by stand without offence in the presence of God's glory. Passion, prejudice, ambition often blind men to their faults. When great passionate forces hurry us on we are not more apt to see the shortcomings and specks of corruption in the motives and actions of the passing moment, than the traveller by a racing express to see the little ring of decay in the lily of the wayside garden past which he is flying. During the Franco-Prussian War a regiment of Prussian soldiers was deploying from the shelter of a wood, in full face of French fire. The appearance of the regiment as seen from a distance, said one of the war correspondents, was like that of some dark serpent creeping out from beneath the wood. The far-stretching figure seemed to leave a dark trail in its path. The correspondent looked carefully through his glass, and this trail resolved itself under close inspection into patches of soldiers who had fallen under French fire. Some of them were seen to get on to their feet, stagger on a few paces, and fall again. The passion of battle was upon them, and they were scarcely conscious of their wounds. And is it not thus with us? We are intoxicated by the passion of life's battle, the battle for bread and place and power and conquest of every kind; and we stagger on, unconscious of the fact that we are pierced with many a hidden wound. The excitements that are in the air whirl us along, and we are all but insensible to the moral disaster He sees who watches the battle from afar. Our slowness to recognise the hurt that has overtaken us may be the sign that the pulse of vitality is fluttering itself out. "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins." It is restraint, not purification, from

presumptuous sin that the Psalmist asks in the second portion of his prayer. Presumptuous sin has no place in a true child of God. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." Cleansed by the forgiving grace of God, we ought to need only deliverance from errors of inadvertence and infirmity. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." No hallowing process, however complete, can remove susceptibility to the temptation even to presumptuous sins. The work of cleansing from secret fault sometimes creates a new peril. We need to be kept back from it, as the restive horse needs the curb. David felt this, and therefore prayed this prayer.

(*Thomas G. Selby.*) *On the duty of examining into our secret faults:*—The faculties of the human mind are never acknowledged to be more imperfect, or at least more inadequate, to the object proposed, perhaps, than when applied to estimate the real merit, or demerit, of men's actions; for, in order to form an opinion on this subject that might have the sanction of strict justice, we must know the motives and intentions of the heart. The generality of men divide their service between two masters, and hence are neither wholly good nor wholly bad. And as we cannot fully understand or appreciate the real character of others, so neither can we our own. Hence the petition before us. Yet we can do something towards the understanding many of our errors and secret faults; and this is our duty. Therefore I would—I. RECOMMEND THE IMPORTANT DUTY OF EXAMINING INTO OUR LATENT IMPERFECTIONS. And this because the growth of character is so gradual. Not all at once do we become vicious, and certainly not all at once do we attain the summits of virtue. We are in a great measure the children of discipline, and therefore the sooner this begins the better. Our great perils are not from the temptations of the open day, but those which are from within. These are the parents of almost every evil deed. How important, then, to attend to these "secret faults." II. SPECIFY SOME OF THOSE SECRET FAULTS TO WHICH WE ARE APT TO BE INATTENTIVE. They assume all manner of disguises, and the mind will throw false glosses over its own deformity. The mean rapacious wretch will call his conduct prudence, temperance, and provident wisdom. The gloomy bigot will despise the warm, steady devotion of the rational Christian. Pride will call itself independence of spirit; and meekness and gentleness will be branded as meanness and pusillanimity. But above all things, we should attend to the nature and the grounds of our satisfactions and pleasures, our griefs and vexations, in the intercourse we carry on with the world. III. POINT OUT SECRET FAULTS WHICH, THOUGH CONSCIOUS OF THEM OURSELVES, WE INDUSTRIOUSLY KEEP FROM THE EYES OF THE WORLD. There is hypocrisy in these, and hence they are worse than others. As, for instance, courtesy in order to deceive, a wicked affectation of Christian gentleness. These are wolves in sheep's clothing. Such are religious from mere worldly motives. They are hypocrites. Yet those who take no care to cleanse themselves from errors of this sort must live and act under a state of the most wretched bondage to the world. All is sacrificed to appearance. The passions, indeed, may be often mortified and suppressed, though not from a sense of religious duty (for then it would be virtue), but from "respect of persons," or the fear of losing some advantage. Men who are thus wedded, as it were, to sin are often as cruel and oppressive as they are selfish and hypocritical. Though they cringe to power, and flatter to deceive; yet they will frequently retire from the insults and vexations of the world within the circle of their respective authority, and there vent their angry and malignant passions with redoubled vehemence and malice. IV. THE CORRECTION OF THESE EVILS. Live as in the sight of God, before whom the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. We may deceive men, but we cannot deceive Him. A time will shortly come when we shall be convinced that there is but "one thing needful," which is the mercy and protection of God, through the merits and atonement of Christ our Lord. The fashion and the appearance of this world will then be so strangely reversed that, among many good and faithful servants who are worthy to enter into the joy of their Lord, we shall see some whose merits we thought highly of shrink from the awful trial of the last day, and vanish like smoke before the wind; while the meek and humble virtues of those whom we might have overlooked and neglected, or perhaps despised, shall shine forth like the sun in His kingdom. (*J. Hewlett, B.D.*) *Secret faults:*—I. WHAT ARE THEY?—They stand opposed to open and presumptuous sins. They relate particularly—1. To the secret bias of the heart to evil. There is what may be called latent guilt; a propensity of the soul never yet developed, but which new circumstances may call forth. 2. To unholy thoughts which we intend no other person shall know. 3. To those sinful emotions and affections which rise up in the best hearts almost

involuntarily, and against which the pure mind struggles. Old habits of evil will torture for a long while the renewed soul. 4. To these plans of evil which are not prosecuted to their completion. Providence hinders them, or else they would be carried out. 5. Those crimes which are perpetrated in darkness or under disguise.

II. SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH SIN IS CONCEALED. 1. Men design to conceal them. And we have the power to conceal our purposes. Society could not exist if we had not such power. The body becomes the shield of the soul, to guard our plans from the observation of all other minds but that of God. But this power of concealment may be abused for purposes of evil, and often is so. But such concealment of guilt is difficult. God has placed in the human frame by nature certain indications of secret guilt; and He meant that where that guilt existed it should betray itself for the well-being of society. He designed not only that the conscience should check the offender, but He implanted in the frame itself certain indications of guilt which He intended also to be a safeguard of virtue. Now, one great art in this world is to obliterate the natural marks of guilt from the human frame, and to counterfeit the indications of innocence. The object is so to train the eye that it will not reveal the secret conviction of crime; so to discipline the cheek that it will not betray the guilty by a sudden rush of blood there; so to fortify the hand and the frame that they will not by trembling disclose the purposes of the soul. But he drills and disciplines himself, and his eye is calm, and his countenance is taught to be composed, and he speaks and acts as if he were an innocent man, and buries the consciousness of the crime deep in the recesses of the soul. Soon the brow is like brass, and the frame is schooled not to betray, and the living indexes of guilt which God had affixed to the body are obliterated, and the conscience is seared, and the whole man has departed from the beautiful form which God made, and has become an artificial and a guilty thing. Again. The arts of polished and refined life, to a melancholy extent, have the same object. They are so arranged as to conceal rancour, and envy, and hatred, and the desire of revenge. They aim not to eradicate them, but to conceal them. 2. Many secret sins are concealed because there is no opportunity of carrying the purpose into execution. 3. Others, because the man has never yet been placed in circumstances which would develop his character. Were they so placed it would be seen at once what they were.

III. SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD ADOPT THIS PRAYER. 1. Because we specially need the grace of God to overcome them. If only by the grace of God we can be kept in the paths of external morality, what protection is there in the human heart against secret sins? 2. Such secret faults are peculiarly offensive to God, and we should therefore pray to be cleansed from them. The guilt of the wicked plan is not annihilated or diminished in the view of the Searcher of hearts, because He chooses to arrest it by His own Providence or because He never allows the sinner the opportunity of accomplishing it. 3. And I add, finally, that we should pray for this, because if secret faults are indulged they will sooner or later break out like smothered fires, and the true character of the heart will be developed. Fires uncap a mountain, because they have been long accumulating, and can be confined no longer. A judge on the bench, like Bacon, shocks the world by the undisputed fact that he has been bribed. The community is horror-stricken, and we feel for the moment like distrusting every man, and doubting all virtue and all piety, and we are almost led to conclude that all our estimates of human character on which we have heretofore acted are false, and we begin to distrust everybody. But such painful disclosures are not departures from the great principles of human nature. There is a maxim that no one suddenly became eminently vile. These lapses into sin are but the exponents of the real character of the man, the regular results of a long course of guilt. And so our cherished faults will one day manifest themselves, unless they are checked and removed by the grace of God and the blood of atonement.

IV. IN CONCLUSION. 1. Distrust yourself, for "Who can understand his errors?" 2. Be humble. Others have fallen, so may you. 3. We have much to dread at the revelations of the day of judgment. With no consciousness of sinfulness but such as I believe common to man, with the recollection of the general aim of my life to do right, with great occasion for thanksgiving that I have been preserved from the open vices that have ruined so many who began the career of life with me, yet I confess to you that if there is anything that I should more than all other things dread, it would be that the record of all my thoughts and feelings should be exhibited to the assembled universe in the last day. That the universe would acquiesce in my condemnation on such a revelation I have no manner of doubt. And if there is any one thing for which I desire to give unfeigned thanks more than others,



it is that through the blood of Christ those sins may be blotted out; and that through the infinite mercy of God the secret sins of which I am conscious may NEVER—no NEVER—be disclosed to assembled worlds. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*)

*Secret faults*.—Jesus Christ when on earth was sneered at by persons who considered themselves highly respectable, and on the whole very good sort of people. It is so now. As long as we are careless and well pleased with ourselves, so long must His message of loving forgiveness appear “foolishness” unto us. We cannot greatly desire to have the burden of sin taken from us if we never have felt it at all. The first thing to be done in order to appreciate the message of forgiveness of sin is to try and understand our errors. And do not be content with mere general confessions. It is easy to say vaguely, “I am a miserable sinner”; it is not quite so easy to say, “Last Monday I told that lie, on Tuesday I was guilty of that mean action, and neglected my duty on this or that occasion,” and so on. Those who feel most free from secret faults are just those who have most of them. The best men are the most humble. It is no easy matter to understand our errors, and to know ourselves even as other men know us, much less as God does. How clearly we can see failings in others which they do not see. Be sure that others see faults in us which we do not see. Ah, if some power would give us the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us. Help herein is to be found by keeping a steady eye on the suspicious part of our character. Ask yourself, “What in me would my enemy first fix on if he wished to abuse me, and what fault would my neighbours be most ready to believe that I had? One cannot but be touched by that story which some wise sanitary observer made known to the public. He noticed how a young woman who had come up to London from the country, and was living in some miserable court or alley, made for a time great efforts to keep that court or alley clean. But gradually, day by day, the efforts of the poor woman were less and less vigorous, until in a few weeks she became accustomed to, and contented with, the state of filth which surrounded her, and made no further efforts to remove it. The atmosphere she lived in was too strong for her. The same difficulty is felt in resisting our errors and secret faults; but not to resist is fatal. A man is tempted to lie, to steal, to wrong his neighbour, to indulge some bad passion, and resolves to do it only once, and thinks that “just once” cannot matter. Oh, pause! That one sin is the trickling rill which becomes the bounding torrent, the broad river, the waste, troubled, discoloured sea. Frequently during Lent we should ask ourselves what are the bad habits that are beginning to be formed in us? We should take the different spheres of life, and examine our conduct as regards each of them. Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord in reference to our business, our home, our pleasures. Our duty to God and our neighbour is so and so, how have we done it? Above all, do we think of Christ as our King and personal Saviour, or is all we really know of Him the sound of His name and the words about Him in the Creeds? But some will ask, Why should I be troubled about my errors, why should I seek to be cleansed from my secret faults? Such thoughts do come to men. Help against them will be found in these facts—First, you have not to fight the battle alone. Christ is your very present help. Then next, struggle after self-improvement, because “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Our future destiny, our eternal life, depends on what we do now. (*E. J. Hardy, M.A.*)

*Kinds of sin*.—The terms used in the Word of God to describe the life of the Christian believer show that it is not a path of ease, nor one of self-indulgence. Gurnall says, “The Christian’s work is too delicate and too curious to be done well between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill and clambered over, no matter how. He had need to be awake that walks upon the brink of a deep river, or that treads on the brow of a steep hill. The Christian’s path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, that it calls both for a nimble eye to discern and a steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither.”

I. CONFESSION OF SIN. There are—1. Secret faults. The heart is deceitful above all things: who can know it? Amazed at the inward corruptions you discover, again and again in wonder you well may ask, “Who can understand his errors?—who can count the number of the one-fourth part of his secret faults?” Some persons think there is no harm in what they in their ignorance call “errors,” or “little sins.” But “little sins, suppose them to be so, are very dangerous. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. A little staff may kill a giant. A little leak will sink a man-of-war. A little flaw in a good cause mars it. So a little sin, if unforgiven, will bar up the doors of heaven, and set wide open the gates of hell. Though the scorpion be little, it will sting to death a lion; and so the least sin will destroy you for ever, if not pardoned by the blood of Christ.”

Watching, therefore, your heart, you will resist every kind of sin, and bring it into subjection to the obedience of Christ. But secret faults, if indulged, will break forth ere long into open sins. These are what David here confesses as—2. Presumptuous sins. David knew what he said when he thus spake. He knew that lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin, and that sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. David had not forgotten the deceit, the lying, the murder, the adultery, most awful sins of presumption, of which he himself had been guilty in the matter of the wife of Uriah the Hittite. II. SUPPLICATION OF PARDON. He prays to be delivered—1. From the guilt of sin. 2. The power of sin. “Keep back . . . from presumptuous sins.” David knew that, were it not for the restraining grace of God, there was no sin which he might not be tempted to commit. Oh, what a scene of sin and misery this fallen world of ours would become were it not for this preventing power of God! See the case of Abimelech in regard to Sarah. Laban in regard to Jacob. And yet more does He hold back His people; David from destroying Nabal. III. DEVOTEDNESS OF LIFE. He singles out two things. 1. Edifying discourse. “Let the words of my mouth,” &c. 2. Devout reflection. 3. He recognises the mainspring of all true religion. “O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” We all need a Redeemer. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *On insensibility to offences*:—These words express a rational and affecting prayer without entering into any interpretation of them. For who has not need to pray against his sins? I. “SECRET FAULTS,” WHAT ARE THEY? Not those which are concealed from mankind, but those which are secret from the offender himself. That these are meant is evident from the opening of the verse, “Who can tell how oft he offendeth?” There would be no reason in the question if the sins were only those which other people did not know of. He must mean those which he himself knew not of. Looking back upon the sins of his past life, David finds himself, as many of us must do, lost and bewildered in their number and frequency. And besides these, there were many which were unnoticed, unreckoned, and unobserved. Against these he prays. II. BUT CAN THERE BE ANY SUCH SECRET SINS? Yes, because habit makes us so familiar with them by repetition, that we think nothing at all of them. These are not notorious crimes but ordinary sins, both of omission and of commission. We may neglect any duty till we forget that it is one. And so with sins of commission. Serious minds are shocked with observing with what complete indifference and unconcern many forbidden things are practised. III. BUT ARE THEY NOT, THEREFORE, SINS? If there be no sense and perception of them, are they yet sins? If it be denied that they are, then it is only the timorous beginner who can be brought to account. It is not that the reasons against the sin have lessened or altered, but only that they, by frequent commission of the sin, have become insensible of it. If the sense be the measure of the guilt of sin, then the hardened sinner is well off indeed. These secret sins, then, are sins. Then—1. Let us join in this prayer, “Oh, cleanse,” &c.; and 2. See the exceeding great danger of evil habits of all kinds. (*Archdeacon Paley, D.D.*) *Secret faults*:—We read in books about the West Indies of a huge bat which goes under the ugly name of the vampire bat. It has obtained this name, sucking as it does the blood of sleepers, even as the vampire is fabled to do. So far, indeed, there can be no doubt; but it is further reported, whether truly or not I will not undertake to say, to fan them with its mighty wings, that so they may not wake from their slumbers, but may be hushed into deeper sleep while it is thus draining away the blood from their veins. Sin has often presented itself to me as such a vampire bat, possessing, as it does, the same fearful power to lull its victims into an ever deeper slumber, to deceive those whom it is also destroying. It was, no doubt, out of a sense of this its deceiving power that the royal Psalmist uttered those memorable words, “Who can understand his errors?” I. HOW IS IT THAT SIN IS ABLE TO EXERCISE THIS CHEATING, DELUDING POWER UPON US? Oftentimes great faults seem small faults, not sins but peccadilloes, and small faults seem no faults at all to us; or, worse than this, that men walk altogether in a vain show, totally and fatally misapprehending their whole spiritual condition, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, with a lie in their right hand, awaking only when it is too late to the discovery that they have fallen short altogether of the righteousness of God. 1. Sin derives its power altogether from ourselves. It has a friend and partisan in us all. Hence we are only too ready to spare it and to come to terms with it, and not to extirpate it root and branch as we should. Our love of ease leads to this. Obedience is often hard and painful. But compliance with sin is almost always easy. Then, again, there is our love of pleasure. The Gospel of the grace of God says, Mortify your corrupt affections; do not follow nor

be led by them. They war against the soul; and you must kill them or they will kill you. Hard lesson to learn! unwelcome truth to accept! And then, there is our pride. Every natural man has a certain ideal self which he has set up, whether he knows it or not, in the profaned temple of his heart, for worship there—something which he believes himself to be, or very nearly to approach to being. And this ideal self, as I have called it, is something which he can regard with complacency, with self-satisfaction, and, on the whole, with admiration. Will a man willingly give this up, and abhor himself in dust and ashes? II. HOW SHALL WE DELIVER OURSELVES FROM THESE SORCERIES OF SIN, these delusions about ourselves? 1. And as a necessary preliminary to any such endeavour, I would say, Grasp with a full and firm faith the blessed truth of the one sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction made for your sins. You will never dare to look your own sins full in the face till you have looked up to the Cross of Calvary, and seen a Saviour crucified there for those sins of yours. Till then you will be always seeking cloaks, palliations, excuses for sin, playing false with your conscience, and putting darkness for light. You will be open to the thousand suggestions that it is not that horrible thing which indeed in God's sight it is. 2. Then remember, that He who made the atonement for your sins, the same is also the giver of the Spirit which convicts of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. Throw open the doors and windows of the house of your soul. Let the light of God, the light of the Holy Ghost, search every nook, penetrate every recess, find its way into every chamber. Ask of God, ask earnestly and continually, for this convincing Spirit. There is nothing else which will ever show us to ourselves as we really are. Those Pharisees of old whom He who reads the secrets of all hearts denounced as whited sepulchres, do you suppose they knew themselves to be hypocrites, actors of a part, wearers of a mask, wholly different in the sight of God from that which they were in one another's sight and in the sight of an admiring world? Ah, no! he is but a poor hypocrite who only deceives others; the true hypocrite has managed also, and first, to deceive himself. So it was, no doubt, with those whom I speak of. Probably nothing seemed more unjust to them than this charge of hypocrisy which the Lord persisted in bringing against them; so deceitful and desperately wicked are these hearts of ours. (*R. Chenevix Trench, D.D.*) *Secret sins*.—Self-examination is most necessary to the knowledge of our sins, but it often happens that with all our search some sins may escape our notice. As in temporal concerns, men often know that by a long course of prodigality, and many expensive vanities, they have contracted a great debt upon their estates, and have brought themselves to the very brink of poverty and distress, and yet, when they try to consider of their condition, find themselves utterly unable to state their accounts, or to set forth the particulars of the debt they labour under; but the more they endeavour to recollect, the more they are convinced that they are mere strangers at home, and ignorant of their own affairs. So in spiritual concerns likewise. Such was David's feeling as expressed in the text. Whenever men doubt their own sincerity and due performance of religious acts it is extremely difficult to reason with their fears and scruples, and to dispossess them of the misapprehensions they have of their own state and condition. Such suggestions as bring ease and comfort to their minds come suspected, as proceeding from their own or their friends' partiality; and they are afraid to hope, lest even to hope in their deplorable condition, should prove to be presumption, and assuming to themselves more than in reason or justice belongs to them. But when we can show them men of approved virtue and holiness, whose praise is in the Book of Life, who have struggled with the same fears and waded through even the worst of their apprehensions to the peaceful fruits of righteousness, it helps to quicken both their spirits and their understanding, and at once to administer knowledge and consolation. And for this reason we can never sufficiently admire the wisdom of God, in setting before us the examples of good men in their lowest and most imperfect state. Had they been shown to us only in the brightest part of their character, despair of attaining to their perfection might incline us to give over the pursuit, by throwing a damp upon our best resolutions. But when we see how God raised them up from their low estate, then heavenly joy and peace often spring from the lowest depth of sorrow and woe. Now let us observe—I. THAT THE SECURITY AND EFFICACY OF REPENTANCE DO NOT DEPEND UPON A PARTICULAR RECOLLECTION OF ALL OUR ERRORS. What are secret sins? They are—1. Negligences. These often surprise us in our devotions, for we find our fervour and attention gone. We are not conscious of it at the time; the fault is secret to us. 2. Ignorances also. There is no conscious intent, as in sins of



presumption. 3. But our sins may partake of the malice of the will, and yet escape the notice of the understanding. For habit, custom, long usage in sin will so deaden conscience that we lose the very sense and feeling of sin. 4. Being partakers in other men's sins, which we are when by our ill example they have been led to sin. Then we share with them in the guilt of their iniquity. How far our influence spreads, to what instances and what degrees of vice, how many we seduced by our example, or hardened by our encouragement, is more than we can tell, and yet not more than we shall answer for. Those who are thus entered in our service, and sin under our conduct, are but our factors. They trade for us, as well as for themselves; and whatever their earnings are, we shall receive our due proportion out of the wages of their sin. This is a guilt which steals upon us without being perceived; it grows whilst we sleep, and is loading our account even when our bodies are in the possession of the grave. The higher our station and the greater our authority the more reason have we to fear being involved in this kind of guilt; because in proportion to our authority will the infection of our example spread; and as our power is great, our encouragement will be the more effectual. But then, on the other side, the good men have done shall live after them, and be placed to their account. It shall be part of their joy to see how others have been blessed through their means. II. THE GUILT WE CONTRACT BY THEM. There is guilt, else David had not prayed, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." They are sometimes the most heinous of all. The guilt of sin does not arise from the power of our memory, nor is it extinguished by the weakness of it. The consequence from the whole is this. That since many of our sins are secret to us, they can only be repented of in general; and since many of our secret sins are very heinous, they must seriously and solemnly be repented of. (*T. Sherlock, D.D.*) *Secret faults:*—Undiscovered sins. The Psalmist is thinking that, beyond the range of conscience and consciousness, there are evils in us all. I. IN EVERY MAN ARE SINS OF WHICH THE DOER IS UNAWARE. Few of us are familiar with our own appearance. Our portraits surprise us. The bulk of good men do not know themselves. Evil has the strange power of deceiving us, and hiding from us our acts' real character. Conscience is loudest where it is least needed, and most silent where most required. Conscience wants educating. We bribe our consciences as well as neglect them. Down below every life there lies a great dim region of habits and impulses and fleeting emotions, into which it is the rarest thing for a man to go with a candle in his hand, to see what it is like. Ignorance diminishes criminality, but ignorance does not alter the nature of a deed. II. THE SPECIAL PERILOUSNESS OF HIDDEN FAULTS. As with a blight upon a rose-tree, the little green creatures lurk on the under side of the leaves, and in all the folds of the buds, and, because unseen, they increase with alarming rapidity. The very fact that we have faults in our characters, which everybody sees but ourselves, makes it certain that they will grow unchecked, and so will prove terribly perilous. Those secret faults are like a fungus that has grown in a wine cask; whose presence nobody suspected. It sucks up all the generous liquor to feed its own filthiness, and when the staves are broken there is no wine left, nothing but the foul growth. Many a Christian man and woman has the whole Christian life arrested, and all but annihilated, by the unsuspected influence of a secret sin. III. THE DISCIPLINE, OR PRACTICAL ISSUES, TO WHICH SUCH CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD LEAD. 1. They ought to take down our self-complacency, if we have any. It should give us a low estimate of ourselves. 2. It should lead us to practise rigid self-inspection. 3. We should diminish as much as possible the merely mechanical and instinctive part of our lives. The less we live by impulse the better. A man's best means of knowing what he is is to take stock of what he does. If you will put your conduct through the sieve you will come to a pretty good understanding of your own character. 4. One of the surest ways of making conscience more sensitive is always to consult it, and always to obey it. If you neglect it, and let it prophesy to the wind, it will stop speaking before long. 5. Compare yourselves constantly with your model. Do as the art-students do in a gallery—take your poor daub right into the presence of the masterpiece, and go over it, line by line and tint by tint. Get near Jesus Christ, that you may learn duty from Him, and you will find out many of the secret sins. 6. Ask God to cleanse us. Revised Version has, "Clear Thou me from secret faults." And there is present in the word, if not exclusively, yet at least predominantly, the idea of a judicial acquittal. So we may be sure that, though our eye does not go down there into the dark depths, God's eye goes; and that where He looks He looks to pardon, if we come to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*The anatomy of secret sins*.—I. IN WHAT RESPECT ARE SINS CALLED SECRET? For the resolution of this know that sins hath a double reference. Either to God, and so really no sin nor manner of sinning is secret. Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord; do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord (Jer. xxiii. 24); it is true, that wicked men with an atheistical folly imagine to hide themselves and their sinful ways from God, they seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? (Isa. xxix. 15.) But really it is not so, though the cloud may somewhat eclipse the light of the sun, and though the dark night may shut it forth altogether, yet there stands no cloud, nor curtain, nor moment of darkness or secrecy 'twixt the eyes of God and the ways of man. The ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings (Prov. v. 21). Or to man, and thus indeed comes in the division of sin into—1. Open; and 2. Secret. Now, in this respect sin may be termed secret diversely—1. In respect of the person sinning: when his very sinning is (formally considered) hidden from himself; he doth a thing which is really sinful, but to him it is not apprehensively so. What outrages did Paul breathe out against the Church in times of his ignorance which he did not know to be acts of sin. 2. In respect of the manner of sinning, and thus sins may be termed secret. (1) When they are coloured and disguised, though they do fly abroad, yet not under that name, but apparelled with some semblances of virtues. (2) When they are kept off from the stage of the world they are like fire in the chimney; though you do not see it, yet it burns; just as 'twixt a book shut and a book opened, that which is shut hath the same lines and words, but the other being opened, every man may see and read them. (3) When they are kept, not only from a public eye, but from any mortal eye. But what were those secret sins from which David desired to be cleansed? Nay, that is a secret; he doth not instance in any one, because his desire is to be freed from every one; he speaks indefinitely. II. BUT WHAT IS THAT TO BE CLEANSSED? There be two expositions of it. 1. One is that he desires to be justified, to be pardoned those sins. And indeed, the blood of Christ which justifies is a cleansing thing, it wipes off the guilt. 2. Another is that he desires more to be sanctified, and that inward actings or motions might be subdued. And observe, he doth desire to be cleansed, he doth not desire to be dipped only into the water, or sprinkled; he doth not desire only to be a little rinsed. Where observe by the way three things. 1. First, he who hath received true grace needs more grace: our lives need to be still reformed, and our hearts still to be cleansed. 2. Again, the progress and perfection of cleansing the soul appertains to God as well as the beginning. The physician must go through with his cure, or else the patient will relapse. 3. Lastly, persons truly holy and sensible desire yet further measures of holiness. III. BUT WHY SHOULD WE DESIRE TO BE CLEANSSED FROM SECRET SINS? 1. Because secret sins will become public sins if they be not cleansed. It is with the soul as it is with the body, wherein diseases are first bred and then manifested; and if you suppress them not in their root, you shall shortly see them to break out in the fruit: or as it is with fire catching the inside of the house first, and there if you do not surprise it, it will make way for itself to get to the outside. Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin (James i. 15). But when they come to public and visible actings, then they are a copy, they are exemplary sins; and like the plague infecting other persons, others are capable to imitate them, and so more souls are tainted, and God now receives a common dishonour. 2. Secret sins are apt to deceive us most, and therefore cleanse these. (1) Because we have not that strict and spiritual judgment of the inwards of sin, as of the outwards; many times we conceive of them as no sins at all. (2) And because most men decline sin upon outward respects, which do not reach the actings of secret sins; shame and fear, and observance are great, and the only restraints to many. They do not live in and visibly commit such sins, because they like not shame and are afraid of punishment. (3) The strength of sin is inward, therefore labour to be cleansed from secret sins. The strength of a sin—1. Lies in its nearness to the fountain, from whence it can take a quick, immediate, and continual supply; and so do our secret sins, they are as near to original sin as the first droppings are to the spring-head. 2. It lies in the acceptance of the affections: love and liking set sin upon its throne. 3. It lies in the confidence of commission: now a man doth take more heart and boldness to commit secret sins than open. 4. It lies in the iteration and frequency of acting, for sin often repeated and acted is like a cable double in strength by the manifold twistings. 5. The principal object of God's eye is the inward and secret frame of the soul, therefore labour to be cleansed from secret sins (Psa. lxi. 16). If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not

hear me (Psa. li. 6). Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *True holiness hath a contrariety to all sin*:—1. That true holiness hath a repugnancy and a contrariety to all sins. It is not contrary to sin, because it is open and manifest; nor to sin, because it is private and secret, but to sin as sin, whether public or whether private, because both the one and the other is contrary to God's will and glory, as it is with true light, though it be but a beam, yet it is universally opposite to all darkness: or as it is with heat, though there be but one degree of it, yet it is opposite to all cold; so if the holiness be true and real, it cannot comply with any known sin; you can never reconcile them in the affection; they may have an unwilling consistence in the person, but you can never make them to agree in the affection. 2. That sanctification is not perfect in this life; he who hath most grace hath yet some sin. Grace, though it may be sound and saving, yet is it not absolute and perfect. 3. Here you may understand the grounds and reasons of the many troubles and heavy complaints of Christians. The main battle of a Christian is not in the open field; his quarrels are most within, and his enemies are in his own breast. When he hath reformed an ill life, yet it shall cost him infinitely much more to reform an ill heart; he may receive so much power from grace at the beginning as in a short time to draw off from most of the former gross acts of sinnings, but it will be a work of all his days to get a thorough conquest of secret corruptions. 4. Then all the work of a Christian is not abroad, if there be secret sins to be cleansed. There are two sorts of duties. Some are direct, which are working duties; they are the colours of grace in the countenance and view of the conversation, setting it forth with all holy evenness and fruitfulness and unblameableness. Some are reflexive, which are searching duties; they appertain to the inward rooms, to the beautifying of them, and reforming of them; for not only the life, but the heart also is the subject of our care and study. I am not only to labour that I do no evil, but also that I be not evil, not only that sin do not distain my paths, but also that it doth not defile my intentions: not only that my clothes be handsome, but also that my skin be white, my inward parts be as acceptable to God as my outward frame is plausible with man. (*Ibid.*) *Sin destroyed in the cause*:—Now, as a man may deal with a tree, so he may deal with his sins; the axe may be employed only to lop off the branches, which yet all live in the root, and he may apply his axe to the very root, to the cutting of it up, and so he brings an universal death to the tree: so it is possible for a man to bestow all his pains to lop off sin only in the visible branches in the outward limbs of it, and it is also possible for a man to be crucifying the secret lust, the very corrupt nature and root of sinfulness. Now, this I say, he who bestows his study, his prayers, his tears, his cares, his watchings, his strength to mortify corruption in the root, in the nature, in the cause, how unquestionable is it that he doth desire to be cleansed from secret sins. (*Ibid.*) *Beware of secret sins*:—I. **MOTIVES TO ENFORCE OUR CARE.** There be many arguments which may justly stir us up to take heed of and to cleanse from secret sins. 1. The Lord knoweth our secret sinnings as exactly as our visible sinnings (Psa. xliv. 21). 2. The Lord will make manifest every secret thing (Mark iv. 22). There is a twofold breaking out of a secret sin or manifestation of it. One is natural: the soul cannot long be in secret actings, but some one part of the body or other will be a messenger thereof. Another is judicial; as when the judge arraigns, and tries, and screws out the close murder, and the dark thefts: so God will bring to light the most hidden works of darkness. 3. Thy secrets shall not only be manifested, but shall also be judged by God (Rom. ii. 16). 4. Secret sins are more dangerous to the person in some respects than open sins. For—1. A man doth by his art of sinning deprive himself of the help of his sinfulness; like him who will carry his wound covered, or who bleeds inwardly; help comes not in because the danger is not described nor known. 2. If a man's sin breaks out, there is a minister at hand, a friend near, and others to reprove, to warn, to direct. II. **THE AGGRAVATIONS OF SECRET SINS.** 1. The more foul the sin naturally is, the worse is the secret acting of it. 2. The more relations are broken by secret sinning, the worse they are, and more to be wared. 3. The more profession a man makes, the worse are his secret sinnings; forasmuch as he carrieth not only a badge, but also a judge on his shoulders. 4. The more light a man hath meeting him in the dark, and secret actings of sin, the more abominable is the sin. 5. The more frequent a man is in secret sinnings, the deeper is his guilt; when he can drive a trade of sin within doors: when it is not a slip, but a course. III. **THE MEANS WHICH HELP AGAINST SECRET SINS.** 1. If thou hast been guilty of secret sins, be humbled and repent. 2. Take heed of secret occasions and provocations. 3. Crush the temptations which come from the roots. 4. Get an hatred of sin, which



will oppose sin in all kinds, and all times, and in all places. 5. Get the fear of God planted in thy heart. There are three sorts of sins which this fear will preserve a man against. First, pleasant sins, which take the sense with delight. Secondly, profitable sins, which take the heart with gain, but what shall it profit me to win the whole world and to lose my soul. Thirdly, secret sins of either sort. 6. Believe God's omniscience and omnipresence. 7. Get thy heart to be upright. (*Ibid.*) *The peril of secret sins*.—In some waters a man may drive strong piles, and build his warehouses upon them, sure that the waters are not powerful enough to undermine his foundations; but there is an innumerable army of minute creatures at work beneath the water, feeding themselves upon those strong piles. They gnaw, they bore, they cut, they dig into the poled wood, and at last a child might overthrow those foundations, for they are cut through and eaten to a honeycomb. Thus by avarice, jealousy, and selfishness men's dispositions are often cut through, and they don't know it. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

**Ver. 13. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins.**—*A conjunction of requests*.—I. THERE MAY AND SHOULD BE A CONJUNCTION, EVEN OF GREAT PETITIONS AND REQUESTS (AT ONCE) UNTO GOD. David ends not at that request (keep me from secret sins), but goes on also, O Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins; he multiplies his suits according to the multiplicity of his necessity and exigence. There be divers qualities about our prayers. 1. One is an urgent fervency. 2. Importunity. 3. Patient perseverance. 4. A variety or multiplicity of matter, like as a patient who comes to the physician, we may and should open not only one want, but all our wants; and crave help not in one thing, but in every thing: we should multiply requests. Reasons hereof are these: 1. God can hear every request as well as any one. A multiplied request as well as a single request: for He takes not, nor observes things by discourse, where one notion may be an impediment to the apprehension of another, but all things (by reason of His omniscience) are equally at once present unto Him. 2. Nay, He can grant many and great requests as easily as the single and smallest petition. The greatest gift comes as freely and readily out of His hand as the most common mercy. 3. Christ is as ready and able to implead many and great requests as well as some and inferior. 4. God hath for this end made manifold promises; therefore we may put up many and great requests at once. 5. Lastly, God is rich in mercy, and plenteous in compassion; His mercies are often styled manifold mercies. II. THAT EVEN A GOOD CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE A FEAR OF GREAT SINS AS WELL AS A CARE OF SECRET SINS. "Keep me also from presumptuous sins." Reasons whereof may be these. 1. The latitude of original sin, which as it is yet remaining in the best, so it is in them an universal fountain naturally apt to any vile inclination. 2. The instances of great transgressions: even those saints who have been as the highest stars have left behind them their twinklings and sad eclipses. Now when cedars fall, should not the tender plants tremble? if the sins of others be not our fear, they may be our practice; what the best have done, the weakest may imitate if they do not hear and fear. He is a wise and sincere Christian who resists the smallest, and fears the greatest sins: Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins. I observe from the words absolutely considered—III. THAT A GOOD MAN IS GOD'S SERVANT. "Thy servant," &c. Servants, not of force, but of affection. IV. THAT WE ARE GOD'S SERVANTS, SHOULD BE USED TO MOVE THE LORD TO HELP US AGAINST SINS. V. THAT OUR SPECIAL RELATIONS TO GOD SHOULD BE SPECIAL REASONS TO WORK A CARE NOT TO SIN AGAINST GOD. The very nature of sin carries along with it a condemnation of sinning, because sin formerly is a transgression, an anomy, and a rebellion, which alone is an inglorious thing. Again, the laws and threatenings of God should be as forcible cords to draw off the heart from sin. And again, all the mercies and goodness of God should exasperate the heart against sin. Again, all the attributes of God might hold us. Now, with these this also may come in, namely, the specialty of our relation to God, that we are His children. Reasons whereof are these—1. Admissions of sinnings here do diffuse a greater ingloriousness to God: sin is more darkening in a white cloud than in a black, as a spot is more eminently disgraceful in a fair than in a foul cloth. 2. Their great sinnings do make them the sorer wounds and work: no sinning wounds so deep as such which have more mercy and goodness to control them. Oh then, let us improve our interest in our God. Should such a man as I flee, said Nehemiah; so then, should such a man as I sin thus, walk thus, live, do thus? Why? God is my God, He is my Father; I am His child, His servant. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Presumptuous sin*.—1. This

is a prayer to be delivered from gross and undisguised sins. "Secret sins" are subtle and hidden; presumptuous sins are open, glaring, outrageous. But are the people of God in any danger from coarse and notorious sins? It is well to remind ourselves that there is no temptation we can treat lightly. The world to-day is full of those who have grievously fallen. 2. Another act of presumption against which we must guard is the unnecessary exposure of ourselves to temptation and harm. The foolhardiness of some is surprising. They expose themselves to sceptical influences, to worldly entanglements, to animal indulgences, to many yawning abysses which threaten body and soul. Myriads perish through standing on the slippery places and dizzy heights of temptation. 3. A branch of presumptuous sin is to treat negligently our secret faults. The presumptuous sin is often first one of those secret faults mentioned in the preceding verse; it is the secret fault matured and ripened. The mistake is that we are not sufficiently impressed by the faint, hidden evil, and we do not make immediate and serious efforts to deal with it. It is thus that our faults increase in magnitude and deepen in colour. Safety lies in dealing with the earliest aberrations of our mental, emotional, and physical nature, and not giving them opportunity to strengthen and display themselves. The Kingdom of Heaven is first as a grain of mustard seed; but we forget that the kingdom of hell in its beginnings is equally microscopic. A medical authority has recently declared that elephantiasis is often occasioned by the bite of the mosquito. 4. Another sin of presumption is to face the natural and inevitable perils of life without availing ourselves of every possible advantage of vigilance and defence. The diver does not descend into the depth without being sure of his panoply. Nothing is more remarkable in nature than the way in which animals and plants are armed against their enemies. The most ferocious thorns and spines protect cacti from destruction by the wild quadrupeds of their desert home. Protective mechanics of a most complicated order are found in a number of plants, which would otherwise be endangered and perhaps entirely destroyed by the attacks of ravenous snails. And God has not left us without a "whole armour"; it would be very unlike Him if He had. But alas! we often neglect to fortify ourselves; we go into a dangerous world with sandals, sword, helmet, and breastplate missing. 5. It is essentially an act of moral presumption to live in a low state of spiritual power. There is no presumption greater than to live with a cold heart, a weak faith, a vacillating purpose. We invite failure and ruin. We are free from harm and condemnation as we live full of power and enthusiasm. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *Of presumptuous sins:*—Everything evinceth the Almightyness of the great Creator. Three instances—1. The glorious fabric of the spangled vault above us. 2. The vicissitude of day and night. 3. The excellencies of that great minister of nature, the sun; considered in the comeliness and beauty of his person, in the force of his incredible swiftness, in the largeness of his walk, in the universality of his influence. The Bible, or book of holy writ, is described by its several names and titles. Note the terms and appellations, the qualities described, and the effects or operations. The third book is the conscience. What finds he there? A foul blurred copy, that he is puzzled how to read. The conscience being convicted of sin, where there is any sense of true piety, the soul will address itself to God for pardon, that it may be cleansed from secret faults; and for grace, that by its restraints and preventions and assistances it may be kept back from presumptuous sins, and, if unhappily engaged, that it may be freed at last from the dominion of them. There is here a request, and the ground of it, which is the advantage and benefit thence arising. Consider two propositions. 1. That the very best of men, without Divine restraints, are liable to the worst of miscarriages, even presumptuous sins. Secret faults are such as hide themselves, the common errors and frailties of our life: sins of infirmity, constitution, and temper; sins of surprise. Deliberation and consent make any sin to be a presumptuous sin. The course of sin is, the invitation of the sensual appetite, the inclination of the will, a force upon the judgment, a full consent, the act itself. This is aggravated into presumption when the daring sin gets the dominion and power over a man. From act it proceeds to delectation; this leads to new acts, and at last obijuration and final impenitence. Note the ways and means God uses either to restrain and keep back men from committing presumptuous sins, or to rescue and recover them from under the dominion of them. These are partly on account of providence, partly from common morality, and partly from special grace. The best of men are still men, partakers of the same common nature with other men. They have the same affections and passions, the same fleshly appetites, which many times betray them into the same inconveniences. 2. Presumptuous sins, even in the servants of God them-

selves, are offences of a damnable and desperate nature. They tincture them with a deep guilt, subvert their spiritual state, and throw them out of God's favour into disgrace. And this reasonably, because of their ingratitude to God, and the great hurt of their example, as a scandal to religion, by the hardening of wicked men and the discouragement of the pious. (*Adam Littleton, D.D.*) *The means of moral preservation* :—What is it to sin presumptuously? The word means, “with a high hand.” Then, to sin presumptuously is to sin in an aggravated degree. 1. To sin in opposition to knowledge is to sin presumptuously. This is not characteristic of *all* sins. Some sins are products of ignorance. 2. To sin in contrariety to conscience is to sin presumptuously. 3. To sin in defiance of the common operations of the Divine Spirit. 4. To sin after having deliberated about the commission of it. 5. To sin when there is no strong temptation to the commission of it. 6. To sin notwithstanding adverse dispensations of Divine providence are loudly calling for sin to be abhorred and avoided. 7. To sin in the hope of ultimately obtaining mercy. (*A. Jack, D.D.*)

*The nature and danger of presumptuous sins* :—They are such as have more of wilfulness and malice prepense than of ignorance and infirmity in them; when a man sins with a high hand against the dictates of reason and the checks of conscience, through the stubbornness and perverseness of a depraved, distorted will. Consider the malignant qualities and mischievous effects of presumptuous sinning. 1. They spring from the corruption of the heart, from some evil lust or affection, some predominancy of pride, avarice, or voluptuousness. 2. After sinning in this manner it is very hard to repent. 3. Supposing a man relents soon after, and is disposed to repent heartily and turn to God; yet it will be difficult for him so to heal the breach which those sins have made as to come with delight and humble confidence to God as before. Advice and directions how to avoid these sins. (1) Be instant in prayers to Almighty God to preserve us by His preventing grace from falling into them. (2) After prayers we must use our best endeavours to help ourselves. We must look well to our hearts, that they may be set right and kept with all diligence. Sinning presumptuously is, as it were, revolting from God and running off into another interest. Our hearts are not whole with God when we do it. (3) We should be often reflecting upon the infinite value of heavenly things above all earthly enjoyments. (4) Our care should be to keep out of temptations as much as possible. (5) We should be watchful of our whole conduct, and especially beware of the beginnings of things. (*T. Waterland.*)

*Avoiding presumptuous sins* :—1. Be sure never to do anything against the clear light of thine own conscience. 2. Strive to be master of thine own will. We count our horses to be unserviceable until they be broken. It is a great point in the art of education for parents betimes to break their children of their wills. 3. Beware of sinful engagements. A man may have already done some evil from which he cannot handsomely acquit himself, but to his loss and shame, unless he either cover it or maintain it by laying another sin upon it. Seldom doth a man fall into presumptuous sin, but where the devil has got such a hank over him. The only way to get free is to break out of the engagement. 4. Harden thyself with a holy obstinacy and wilfulness. (*Bishop Sanderson.*) *Presumptuous sins* :—Some sins are greater than others. Every sin has in it the very venom of rebellion, but there be some which have in them a greater development of its essential mischief, and which wear upon their faces, as do presumptuous sins, more of the brazen pride which defies the Most High. Though under the Jewish law an atonement was provided for every kind of sin, there was none for this. “The soul that sinneth presumptuously shall have no atonement; it shall be cut off.” Very terrible, then, are these sins.

**I. WHAT ARE THEY?** 1. Those that are committed wilfully against manifest light and knowledge. Conscience furnishes often such light; it is the voice of God in the heart. If conscience warn you, and yet you sin, that is presumption. 2. Deliberation is another characteristic of these sins. There are some who can think upon a sin for weeks, and dote upon the thought of it and plan for it, and then when opportunity comes, go and commit it. 3. Long continuance in it. 4. Design. See the punishment of the Sabbath-breaker told of in the Book of Numbers. He was punished, not merely because he gathered the sticks on the Sabbath, but because the law had just been proclaimed, “In it (the Sabbath) thou shalt do no manner of work.” 5. The hardihood born of fancied strength of mind. “It won't hurt me,” say many. But they find that they are hurt. It would be presumption for any man to climb to the top of the spire of a church and stand upon his head. “Well, but he might come down safe if he were skilled in it.” Yes, but it is presumptuous. You have heard how Dionysius the tyrant punished one who had



displeased him. He invited him to a noble feast. Rich were the viands that were spread upon the table, rare the wines he was invited to drink. But he was utterly miserable, he sat in his chair in agony. For over his head, immediately over it, there hung a sword, bright and sharp, suspended by a single hair, and he had to sit all the time with this sword above him. He could not escape, he must sit where he was. Conceive the poor man's misery. But you, who will procrastinate, are willingly placing yourself in a position as full of peril, and yet you make mirth. II. THE SINFULNESS OF THESE SINS. It is because they are against light and knowledge, are deliberate and wilfully done. III. THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THIS PRAYER. It was the prayer of a saint. "Hold me in, Lord, I am prone to these sins." See how Paul warns saints against the most loathsome sins. There is enough tinder in the heart of the best of men to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell. But how much more have we need to pray this prayer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*The anatomy of presumptuous sins*:—I. WHAT PRESUMPTUOUS SINS ARE. 1. That presumptuous sinnings are proud adventurings of the heart upon sin; there is a large difference 'twixt foilings by temptation and adventurings by presumption. Temptation beats down that actual strength of grace resisting: but presumption tramples down the light of the Word opposing. A man doth even try it out with God, and provokes Him to His face; and maintains the devices of his heart against the purity and equity of God's will. 2. In presumptuous sinnings a man knows the thing and way to be unlawful: and therefore the presumptuous sinner is opposed to the ignorant sinner; the presumptuous sinner holds a candle in one hand, and draws out the sword with the other. 3. The presumptuous sinner adventures against express threatenings. 4. Presumptuous sins do arise from a false confidence; there are two things upon which the presuming sinner doth embolden himself. (1) One is the facility of mercy: when a man sets mercy against sin, he doth well; but when a man sets mercy against justice, now he offends. "'Tis true, this is a sin, and Divine justice will not take it well, but I will adventure on it, hoping that Divine mercy will pacify the rigour of the threatening; I will sin and offend justice, but then I will decline that court by flying to the mercy-seat" (Deut. xxix. 19). (2) Another is the self-possibility and strength of future repentance: he is one of the worst patients in a way of sinning who is confident that he can be his own physician: no soul wounds itself more than that which vainly thinks that it can presently cure them. There are two things which the sinner cannot assure himself of. One is the lengthening of his life; for this candle is lighted and put out, not according to our desires, but according to Divine pleasure: all life has its limits from the Lord of life and death. Another is the returning of the heart from sin. 5. In many presumptuous sinnings there is a slighting contempt (Numb. xv. 30, 31): presumptuous sinning is called a despising of the Word of the Lord. 6. Lastly, presumptuous sinning may rise higher than all this, as when a man sins not only knowingly and wilfully, but most maliciously and despitefully against God and Christ (Heb. x. 29, vi. 6). II. WHAT THAT STRENGTH IS WHICH KEEPS BACK REGENERATE PERSONS FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS; and what difference 'twixt the restrainings of evil men and this keeping back of good David. 1. Restraint is any kind of stop 'twixt the inclination and the object; when the nature is inclined to such a thing, and a bar falls in to keep them asunder, this is restraint. 2. Restraint of any agent ariseth from a greater strength of a superior agent: whatsoever keeps a man back from a sinful acting, it is (at that time) whiles a restraint of more actually strong force than the present inclination is; as in the stopping of a stone or water, that which is unequal in strength, a lesser force is not able to keep in the stronger. Though sinful inclinations be strong, yet God can overrule and bound and bind it in. 3. All restraint presupposeth an aptness, a disposition ready to run and get out. The child whose desire is to lie in the cradle is not there said to be restrained; and the tradesman whose shop is his paradise is not therefore restrained from going abroad; but when a servant would be gadding, and yet is kept in, this is restraint. 4. All restraint of sin is from God. 5. All evil men are not equally restrained by God. 6. The restraining of any sinner is an act of a merciful Providence unto him. 7. God doth restrain the good and the bad from sin. 8. God doth diversely keep back or restrain men from particular sins and sinnings: sometimes—(1) By enlivening the conscience. (2) By self-reflecting apprehensions. (3) By legal imprintings. (4) By denying and crossing opportunities. (5) By denying or withholding of temptations. (6) By causing diversions, which may call aside the employment of the sinner another way. (7) Lastly, by beginning and supporting and enlarging the principle of sanctification. 9. The restrainings of good men are

exceedingly different from those of evil men. The restraints of evil men are but as locks upon the out-door; and the keeping back of good men is as the lock upon the closet. One is an impedit to the actions, the other is an impedit to the inclinations; one is a bridle upon the lips and hands, the other is a bond upon the heart and disposition. They differ in their efficacy: restraints of evil men do not impair the state of sin, no more than chains and prisons do the nature of the thief or lions. Mere restraints do not deal justly with sins, they make a stop in one, and leave open a gap for other sins: like a vessel of many holes, though the water break not out in one place, because it is stopt, yet it freely flies out in the rest. So where a man is restrained only, though that sin cannot find a way in that vein, yet it will find a course (like the water which is hindered under ground) another way. But the holdings back by renewing grace do indispose generally and evenly. They differ in the fulness of duration; for mere restraints hold in the nature no longer than the things remain by virtue of which the mind was restrained. Let the fear of death expire, put aside the edge of the law, be sure that shame shall not follow, and the only restrained sinner breaks open school, so that he goes to the sin. But holdings back by renewed grace are prohibitions of the heart upon permanent grounds, namely, the perpetual contrariety 'twixt God and sin, 'twixt sin and His will and holiness and goodness and honour. They differ in this, that the heart of a man only restrained doth, being at liberty (like waters held up), pour forth itself more violently and greedily, as if it would pay use for forbearance. They differ thus. An evil man is kept back as a prisoner by force against his will; but a good man is kept back as a petitioner. It is his heart's desire. Oh, that my ways were so directed that I might keep Thy statutes. It is an evil man's cross to be restrained, and a good man's joy to be kept back from sin. Take what I conceive, briefly thus: God keeps back His servants from sin—I. By preventing grace, which is by infusing such a nature, which is like a bias upon the bowl, drawing it aside another way. 2. By assisting grace, which is a further strength superadded to that first implanted nature of holiness, like a hand upon a child holding him in. 3. By quickening grace, which is, when God doth enliven our graces to manifest themselves in actual opposition, so that the soul shall not yield, but keep off from entertaining the sin: as when in the motions of sin He inflames the heart with an apprehension of His own love in Christ. 4. By directing grace, which is when God confers that effectual wisdom to the mind, tenderness to the conscience, watchfulness to the heart, that His servants become greatly solicitous of His honour, scrupulously jealous of their own strength, and justly regardful of the honour of their holy profession. 5. By doing grace, which is when God effectually inclines the heart of His servants to the places and ways of their refuge, safeties, and preservations from sin. III. WHAT CAUSES OR REASONS THERE SHOULD BE WHICH MIGHT MOVE DAVID TO PUT UP THIS PRAYER: "Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins." 1. If he considered himself, there were sufficient grounds for such a petition, because—(1) His aptness by virtue of original corruptions, even to presumptuous sins. (2) His impotency and self-inability to keep off himself from such sins. 2. In respect of the sins themselves. Amongst which higher ranks of iniquity are presumptuous sins and sinnings, which may appear thus—(1) The more shining light of grace is trampled over for to act the sin, the viler is the sinning. (2) The more pride of heart accompanies any kind of sinning, this makes it the more vile. (3) The more impudency and boldness attends a sinning, the worse it is. (4) The more abuse of mercy concurs to the sinning, the more heinous it raiseth the sin. 3. In respect of others. (1) Such sins would be exemplary and noted. (2) Such sinnings from him would be trophies to evil men. 4. In respect of God. (1) What God had been to him might cause him to pray against presumptuous sins. (2) What he was to God. Why? David was His servant. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Presumptuous sins*:—A man is guilty of this sin when, without having sufficient strength, he undertakes to do something of himself; or, without warrant, reckons to receive some extraordinary aid from the mercy or power of God. Over-valuing of ourselves as to our own strength, as Peter did; or trusting to the mercy of God without the warrant of a promise, as did the sons of Sceva, is presumption. Sins are distributed into sins of ignorance, of infirmity, and of presumption, as related to the understanding, the will, and the sensual appetite or affections. If the fault lies in the understanding, the sin may be a sin of ignorance. If in the affections, the sin may be a sin of infirmity. Where sin has none of these excuses it is a wilful, that is, a presumptuous, sin. See the sins of Paul before his conversion, of Peter in his denial, of David in the matter of Uriah. Paul's was a sin of ignor-

ance, Peter's a sin of infirmity, David's a sin of presumption. Observe how great and mischievous presumptuous sins are. They originate from a worse cause than other sins, and thence are more sinful; they produce worse effects, and so are more dangerous. They harden the heart. They almost annihilate the conscience. Presumptuous sins cannot be removed by ordinary humiliations. A more solemn and lasting course of repentance is necessary. These sins leave scars behind, like bad wounds, when healed, leave in the flesh. 1. A presumptuous sinner rarely escapes without some outward affliction. 2. Presumptuous sins are often scandalous, leaving an indelible stain on the offender. 3. Presumptuous sins leave a sting in the conscience of the sinner. How may we avoid such sins? (1) Never do anything against the clear light of thine own conscience. (2) Strive to be master of thine own will. (3) Beware of engaging thyself to sin. As in the case of Herod with Herodias. (*Bishop Sanderson.*) *The nature, danger, aggravations, and cure of presumptuous sin*.—I. WHEN IS A MAN GUILTY OF THIS SIN? 1. When sin is committed against the powerful dictates of his own conscience and the clear conviction of the Holy Ghost. 2. When sin is upon long deliberation and forecast, plotting and contriving how it may be accomplished. When the affections are calm and quiet, no hurrying and perturbation of passion to cause the sin. 4. The temptations, and our behaviour under them, will show when the sin is presumptuous. Were but sinners truly apprehensive of their wretched estate, how they stand liable every moment to the stroke of Divine justice, how that there is nothing that interposeth betwixt them and hell, but only God's temporary forbearance of them, truly it were utterly impossible to keep them from running up and down the streets like distracted persons crying out with horror of soul, "Oh, I am damned, I am damned"; but their presumption stupefies them, and they are lulled asleep by the devil; and though they live in sin, yet they still dream of salvation; and thus their presumption flatters them, till at length this presumption ends then, where their damnation begins, and never before. II. SOME AGGRAVATING CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THESE SINS. 1. They do exceedingly harden and steel the heart to go on in them, making men resolute and secure, or else leaving them desperate. They cry out with Cain, "My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven." Despair of pardon oftentimes exasperates to more and greater offences. As if a thief, when he is robbing of a man, should argue with himself, "If I am detected of this robbery it will cost me my life; and if I murder him I can but lose my life"; just so do many argue: "My sins are already so many and so great, that I cannot avoid damnation for them; it is but in vain for me to struggle against my own fate and God's decrees. It is too nice a scruple, since God hath given me up to the devil, for me not to give up myself to sin." And so away they go to sin; and sin at random, desperately and resolutely. Oh, horrid hardness! 2. They brazen the face with most shameless impudency (Isa. iii. 9; Jer. vi. 15). For they will dare to commit foul sins publicly and knowingly. Others will boast and glory in them, and yet others will boast of wickednesses they never dared to commit. As cowards brag of their exploits in such and such a combat which yet they never durst engage in, so there are a generation in the world who dare not, for the terror of their consciences, commit a sin, that yet will boast that they have committed it; as if it were a generous and honourable thing to be called a daring sinner. 3. What if God should cut off such in the very act of their sin, giving them no space for repentance? 4. How hard it is to bring presumptuous sinners to repentance and reformation. Certainly, they that dare sin when they see hell before them, there is no hope that they will leave sinning till they see hell flaming round about them, and themselves in the midst of it. III. THE BEST CHRISTIANS ARE PRONE TO THEM. This we may learn from—1. The examples of others. See Noah, David, &c. 2. The pressing exhortations against them in the Bible. 3. The irritating power that the law hath (Rom. vii. 6). Our corruptions have made us combustible matter, that there is scarce a dart thrown at us in vain; when he tempts us it is but like the casting of fire into tinder, that presently catcheth; our hearts kindle upon the least spark that falls; as a vessel, that is brimful of water, upon the least jog, runs over. Satan hath got a strong party within us, that, as soon as he knocks, opens to him and entertains him. And hence is it that many times small temptations and very petty occasion draw forth great corruptions; as a vessel that is full of new liquor, upon the least vent given, works over into foam and froth; so, truly, our hearts, almost upon every slight and trivial temptation, make that inbred corruption that lodgeth there swell and boil and run over into abundance of scum and filth in our lives and conversations. IV. IT IS GOD'S POWER ONLY THAT CAN



PRESERVE THE CHRISTIAN FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SIN. 1. We should have thought that such dreadful sins would be easily kept at arm's length. For such sins generally give notice and warning to prepare for resistance. And natural conscience doth especially abhor and more oppose them. And the fear of shame and infamy in the world often holds men back, as doth often the fear of human laws and penalties. And yet—2. We still do greatly need this prayer, "Keep back," &c., as Scripture and experience alike attest. But—3. Some may object, if we have no power to keep from these vices, why doth God complain of us for doing what we cannot help doing, and which He only can preserve us from? But we say that a man has power, as, for example, to rise up if he be seated; no one would deny such power, and yet he cannot exercise it unless God excite and rouse it in him, for "in Him we live and move and have our being." All our powers are latent and sleepy until God rouse them up. V. HOW GOD KEEPS MEN BACK FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS. 1. Frequently by a strong hand of Providence upon them,—as (i) shortening the lives of sinners (Psa. lxiv. 6, 7; Eccles. viii. 13); or (ii) by cutting short their power (Psa. lxxvi. 5; John vii. 30; Hos. ii. 6); or (iii) by raising up opposition to them, as when Saul would have put Jonathan to death, the people would not let him; or (iv) by diverting men from their purpose (Dan. xi. 30), as He did Joseph's brethren from killing him. (v) By removing the object against which they intended it, as Peter from Herod. And there are other ways still. But what woeful estate wicked men are in whom not grace but only Providence restrains. How we should thank God for such providences for others and for ourselves. But—2. God keeps men back by His grace. And this He does by either restraining or sanctifying grace. These differ—1. In respect of the subject. Restraining grace is common, and works upon wicked men as well as others. As in Esau, who was restrained from hurting Jacob (Gen. xx. 6). But none but the children of God have sanctifying grace. 2. In their nature and essence. Sanctifying grace is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God (Jer. xxxi. 33, and 1 John iii. 9; Matt. xii. 35). But restraining grace has no such habit and principle, but is only occasional and temporary. 3. In their operation. Sanctifying grace keeps the soul from sin by destroying it; restraining, only by imprisoning it. The former strikes especially at the sins of the heart, the latter only hinders the sins of the life. Sanctifying grace engages the will against sin; but restraining grace only rouses up the conscience against it. Now, a wicked man may sin against his conscience; but it is impossible that he should ever sin against his will. That is continually set upon sin; and were it not that God sometimes raiseth up natural conscience in him to oppose his corrupt will, he would every moment rush into the most damning impieties without any of the least regret or sense of it. When the devil presents a sin to the embraces of the will, and when the will closes with it, and all the faculties of the soul are ready to commit it, God sends in conscience among them. "What, Conscience, art thou asleep! Seest thou not how the devil and thine own devilish heart are now plotting and contriving thine eternal ruin?" This rouses conscience, and makes it storm and threaten, and hurl firebrands into the face of sin, while it lies in the very embraces of the will; and, though it cannot change the will from loving it, yet it frights the will from committing it. This is the most usual way which restraining grace takes for the prevention of sin, by sending in conscience to make strong and vigorous oppositions against it. VI. APPLICATION OF ALL THIS. 1. How erroneous to ascribe our preservation not to the grace of God, but to our own will. 2. How we ought to praise God if we are preserved from these sins. 3. How we should guard against provoking God to withdraw the influence of His grace from us. He will never utterly forsake us; but yet He may so far depart from us as that we may have no comfortable sense of His presence, nor any visible supports from His grace. We may be left a naked and destitute prey to every temptation; and fall into the commission of those sins out of which we may never be able to recover ourselves to our former strength, comfort, and stability. We may fall, to the breaking of our bones; and we may rise again, possibly, but it will be to the breaking of our hearts. (E. Hopkins, D.D.) *Intentional sins* :—These stand contrasted with unconscious sins, or those committed ignorantly. See Deut. i. 43, which contains a direct charge of wilful and intentional sins. Sins of ignorance are told of in Deut. iv. 2. But we speak of the former, and would note—I. THEIR GUILT. For—1. They are the embodiments of forethought. 2. Are the result of desire. 3. Are prompted sometimes by circumstances. 4. Are committed with the hope of escaping the consequences; 5. And against the voice of conscience. 6. They are antagonistic to God; and are 7. The greatest of all sins. II. THEIR RESTRAINTS. 1. Providence (Gen. xx. 6).

2. Truth. 3. Divine influence. 4. Mediation, the intercessory life of Christ.

III. THE RELATION OF PRAYER TO THESE RESTRAINTS. Prayer is—1. Power. 2. The greatest power. 3. It is exerted in harmony with a preconceived plan of salvation. IV. THE VALUE OF PRAYER TO HIM WHO PRAYS against these sins.

1. Freedom—"Let them not have dominion over me." 2. Rectitude—"I shall be innocent." (*J. H. Hill.*)

*Presumptuous sins*:—It is a humiliating thought that even good men are prone to commit sins of presumption. Iniquity is of a progressive character, a growing evil, and from thoughtless sin we advance on until we come to these, the worst of all. I. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY "PRESUMPTUOUS SINS"? 1. They are to be distinguished (1) from the imperfections which attach to the obedience of good men. We all come short of the Divine glory. Our best services are imperfect. And (2) from the sins of ignorance. Scripture admits the extenuating power of ignorance. And (3) from sins of infirmity arising from the depraved condition of our being. To ascertain the presumptuous character of a sinful action, the temptation itself must be considered, and the way in which it assails a man. If the adversary comes in like a flood, and carries him down the stream before he has time to reflect on his position, the guilt is less than when he has deliberately considered the evil and calmly decided on its perpetration. If a man be suddenly provoked and conceives an injurious thought, or utters a passionate exclamation; if an unlawful or impure desire suddenly starts into existence in the soul, which the man shortly represses, he is not chargeable with a sin of presumption, but with a sin of infirmity. Let no one, however, from these remarks, seek a palliative for his guilt. Even those actions which a man seeks to excuse himself for, if he dwell upon all the extenuating circumstances of his sin, it is no longer his infirmity; it is a cherished evil, and the pains he takes to defend it to his own mind indicates it to be a sin which he has rolled under his tongue as a sweet morsel. Having thus cleared the way by these necessary distinctions—2. Let us examine more particularly what are presumptuous sins. (1) Presumption is unreasonable confidence, and, applied to sin, it is adventurous daring in iniquity. It is doing that which we know to be wrong, and yet persuading ourselves that we shall go unpunished, or determining to venture the risks and brave all hazards. Scripture speaks of it in the strongest terms to indicate its foul enormity. Presumption in sin is sin in its most malignant form. But we go further, and say, if the action be of doubtful character, presumption attaches to it. If we are inclined to do that which we suspect is sinful, about which we doubt whether it be lawful, if we gratify our inclinations while our suspicions of its evil character remain, we are guilty of presumptuous sin. (2) Deliberation and forethought greatly increases its presumptuous character. Some sins, as we have seen, come suddenly upon a man. The sin of Peter was of this kind; he had no intention of denying his Master, but to acknowledge Him. Though his sin was great, it was not presumptuous; but when a man considers with himself whether he shall sin or no, and he ponders over it, looks at the desired object, at the sin which is in his way to it, at the sanctions of the Divine law and the offence it will be to God, weighs each in his mind, and at length determines on the transgression, then that is indeed great and presumptuous sin. Do not imagine this is too great an evil for a Christian to commit. (3) So also does defiance of conscience and the strivings of the Spirit of God with the soul. (4) All perseverance in sin deserves this dreadful character. (5) If men yield to slight temptations. II. HOW NECESSARY IT IS FOR US TO BE KEPT FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS. Because of its virulence it is greatly to be dreaded. And there is great danger even of Christians falling into such sin. Man is prone to self-confidence. "Take heed to yourselves," says our Lord. One sin allowed brings others. Of all sins this is most difficult to cure. For it benumbs the conscience and perverts the judgment. Cherish a deep sense of the sinfulness of these sins, and that will make you sincere and earnest in your prayer. (*E. Summers.*)

*Presumptuous sinning*:—I. WHAT ARE PRESUMPTUOUS SINS? 1. Sins committed against the light of our understanding and the plain dictates of our conscience. 2. When committed with deliberate contrivance—with purpose of heart. We "make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." 3. Sin upon slight inducements and small provocations. 4. Sin in spite of correction, rebukes, and obstacles which God throws in their path. Balaam. Ahaz. 5. Systematic sin, by an abuse of God's free mercy in the Gospel. These are the worst of all. II. GOOD MEN ARE LIABLE TO THESE SINS. This is David's prayer. He knew that he was liable. And so are all good men. For—1. See the exhortations addressed to them. 2. Facts recorded about them. 3. The prayers they offer. III. HOW GOD ANSWERS THIS

PRAYER. 1. By natural means, such as moral and religious education—a regard to reputation. Fear of public punishment and disgrace. 2. Providential restraints. God puts, at times, obstacles in our way; or diverts the mind; or renders it essential to us to practise diligence and frugality; or removes the object of temptation. A wise minister used often to say, “We ought to be thankful for the graces of providence as well as the influences of grace.” 3. Spiritual and gracious methods. Giving the new heart and causing us to delight in the law of God. (*George Clayton.*)

*On the nature of presumptuous sins:*—I. WHAT THESE PRESUMPTUOUS SINS ARE. Three parts go to make up such a sin—1. That a man undertake an action known by him to be unlawful or at least doubtful. 2. That, notwithstanding, he promise to himself security from the punishment due to it. 3. That he do this upon motives utterly groundless and unreasonable. He cannot plead ignorance nor surprise. II. INSTANCES OF SUCH SINS. Of the most notable kind are—1. To sin against the goodness of God manifesting itself to a man in great prosperity. What ingratitude this. 2. To sin when God is judging and afflicting us. When He is trying to hold us back from our sins. What is this but to wage war with God? 3. To sin when the sin is clearly discovered to us in the Word of God, and when God has wrought in us conviction concerning it. 4. To sin when God’s providence is seeking to thwart it and, as it were, lies cross to the commission of it. As when Pharaoh would go after the Israelites notwithstanding God made him know He would not have him do so. 5. When conscience has checked, warned, and remonstrated against such sin. It is to resist God’s Spirit. 6. When we know that by such sin we destroy all our joy in God, and all our happiness and power in serving Him. 7. When we go back again and again to the same sin. Flies are accounted bold creatures, for drive them off from a place as often as you will, yet presently they will be there again. But for a man who has by God’s grace been rescued from some gross sin to go back to it—what hope is there of that man’s being saved? III. CONSIDER SOME REMEDIES AGAINST THESE SINS. 1. Try to get deep apprehension and persuasion of the evil of sin generally. To this end see what evil sin hath wrought. 2. Then let a man reflect seriously upon God’s justice. 3. Think how men would be exasperated if we were to deal with them so. IV. WHY DOES DAVID THUS EARNESTLY PRAY? He prays against them as so many pests, so many direful causes of God’s wrath, so many devourers of souls. And he thus prayed because—1. Of the danger of falling into these sins. Our nature so prone to them. Men measure their beliefs by their desires. Most men are of a debonnaire, sanguine, jolly disposition, so that where despair has slain its thousands presumption has slain its ten thousands. And the greatness of the mercy of God leads men to presume, for it is more manifest than His anger, and Satan is ever busy to put men in such sins (1 Chron. xxi. 1; Luke xxii. 3; Acts v. 3). 2. The sad consequences of them. They grow by indulgence. They waste conscience and so are hard to cure. They bring down greater judgments than any others. They are big with confusion, disaster, and curse. God must thus confound an audacious sinner in his course. (*Robert South, D.D.*) Let them not have dominion over me.—*What dominion of sin doth import:*—Dominion is given sometimes to God, sometimes to Christ as Mediator, sometimes to man over man, sometimes to Satan over man, sometimes to death, which is said to rule, and sometimes to sin, when it is betwixt sin and the sinner, as betwixt a king and his subjects. As a reigning king hath dominion, so sin, it acts in all things like a king. 1. It hath possession: original sin of our hearts; actual sin of our lives. 2. Hath a title, our forsaking of God, and voluntary election and compact. 3. Hath a throne, our souls. 4. Hath servants, our members. 5. Hath a council, our carnal wisdom and corrupt reasonings. 6. Hath power to give laws, and see them executed. Paul speaks of the law in his members, and the law of sin (Rom. vii. 21, 22). But more distinctly for the better understanding this, observe these particulars—1. That dominion properly is the right and power of a lord over a servant; it is a word implying superiority and subjection, one who hath authority to command, and another whose condition is obediential, and to serve. 2. Observe that dominion is twofold: it is—

(1) Original and absolute, and this is when the Lord hath a natural, and prime, and irrelative title. (2) Derivative, and depending, and limited: such is the dominion which God hath given man over the creatures. 3. Observe that there is a twofold dominion. One is lawful, such a dominion and subjection which the Word and will of God doth or will warrant. Another is unlawful, and as it were usurped. 4. Consider that the dominion of sin doth imply two things. (1) One is singular power, and strength joined with authority. (2) Another is quiet, willing, and total yielding



of subjection to that authority, law, and command of sin : when a man is as cheerfully prepared to obey his lusts, as any subject is to embrace the commands of his prince. Sin may be said to have dominion—1. In respect of assent : when the understanding subjects itself to his motions a man may apprehend sin as working, and yet he may not embrace, but resist that working of sin. And then it is not sin in dominion, but subjection puts up sin into the throne. And here, too, we must again distinguish of that subjection of assent which denominates dominion, that it is not a mere passive subjection (as when a man is taken prisoner), but an active subjection, a subjection of approbation, as when a servant hears the will of his master, and he likes it so. 2. In respect of the consent of the will, when the will declares itself expressly as a party for sin. Here now falls in a subtle and deep inquiry whether all resistance impairs dominion, and no resistance doth always infallibly argue it. I answer briefly to the first. That all resistance doth not prejudice dominion. A man may hold a firm league with sin in his heart, though sometimes in some particulars he may skirmish and quarrel. There is therefore a double resistance, or denying with sin. One is collateral and accidental ; which doth not arise from an immediate contrariety of nature, but from a contrariety of effects. Another is natural and immediate ; which depends on an holy nature implanted in the soul, which opposeth sin as a thing formally evil and displeasing to God. This resistance doth prejudice sin in its dominion, but the former doth not. No resistance doth imply the consent to be plenary, and therefore sin to be in dominion : when the estate of the soul is such, that no contrary quality stands 'twixt the command of sin and the obedience of a sinner, it is easy to point who is lord of the house ; and indeed, what doth more palpably demonstrate dominion than a quiet subjection ? 2. But yet another question is raised, whether a good man, in whom sin hath not dominion, may not yield a plenary consent of will : which if, then plenary consent argues not dominion. 1. It is possible that he may sin willingly. 2. That there is a double concurrence of the will's consent to sin. One is real, when in truth the whole inclination of the will is for sin, and where it is thus there sin is in dominion. Another is sensible, which is an observed acting of the will as embracing, and leaguering it with sin ; when all is a corrupt inclination and consent. Now here I conjecture, that possibly sin may not always have dominion, where yet, for the present, and for a particular, the whole sensible part of the will seems only for sin. My reason is this, the resistances of grace are secret and more hidden ; and again, when the soul is hurried to a sin in the heat of temptations and passions, it is not easily able to observe every secret and transient regretting and opposition. 3. You must distinguish 'twixt dominion of sin, and 'twixt a strong inclination to sin : dominion of sin is a thing more natural, but the strong inclination may be preternatural. 4. Lastly, you must distinguish 'twixt facts, and 'twixt courses ; and 'twixt particular, and 'twixt general intentions ; and 'twixt too much yielding, and a plenary yielding and resignation. The will may come on to sin (where it hath not dominion) in respect of facts ; and by a particular intention, and by a partial yielding : but where the will comes on as to a course, and with a general intention, and with a plenary yielding, there is dominion. Thus of the dominion of sin in respect of the will. The dominion of sin may be considered in respect of the work or service ; the working of sin, and obedient acting of it, doth also include and express its dominion ; hence they, in whom sin hath dominion, are said to serve sin, and they are said to obey sin, and they are said to commit sin, and they are said to do the work of the devil (John viii. 44). Again, we must distinguish of obedience to the commands of sin. One is simple and absolute : which is when to sin, though it be not every particular thing which a man doth, yet it is a principal thing unto which he applies himself : as that is a man's trade, not presently which he looks upon or deals in, but wherein he doth principally and chiefly deal in, unto which he applies the current and strength of his stock. Another is cursory or transient : as a bee may light upon a thistle, but her work is to be gathering at flowers : or a sheep may be in the dirt, but its work is to be grazing on the mountains, or in the meadows : or an honest traveller may be beside the way in a wood, or in an house, but his work is to go on in the king's road. So is it possible for a man, in whom sin hath not dominion to touch upon sinful facts. 5. I conjecture : that it is fit to add one thing more in the general about the dominion of sin, as respecting its powerful commands that it is either—(1) Habitual, where sin in the course behaves itself as a king, it rules, and commands, and disposeth of the person to its base services and lusts. (2) Actual, and this is not properly its dominion, though it be miscalled so, yet to give a little scope to freeness of language, I will call it an actual

dominion, which is rather a particular prevalency of acts, than a sovereignty or dominion in the nature, when though the heart and nature have surrendered themselves to Christ as the only Lord, and to His will as the only law, yet in many particulars sin gets the better over grace, though it cannot be said to rule, yet it may be said to conquer. Against which, if I mistake not, David doth here principally bend himself when he prays "Let not them have dominion over me," that is, not only let them not rule, but which is beyond that, let them not so much as prevail over me. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Why David prays against sin in dominion:*

—Remember that precedent distinction of actual dominion, which comprehended a particular prevalency over the soul for particular acts of sinning: and of habitual dominion which intimated the full resignation of the heart to the commands of corruption. In both respects there may be great reasons why any man should pray against the dominion of sin.

**I. AGAINST ACTUAL DOMINION.** 1. Because though actual dominion doth not infallibly testify the person to be bad: yet it is ever a breaking forth of what is very bad; forasmuch as the action in this case is but sin acted. Now consider—(1) That every sin (as acted) is therefore the worse: you know that sin, though it be a vile thing, yet it tends towards a perfection (in its kind); lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished, &c. (James i. 15). (2) That the acting of the greater sin is always a greater kind of sinning: I mean, if things be equally set together. A high sin, a presumptuous sin in temptation, is not so guilty as the same presumptuous sin in dominion; for all sin in service is ever worse than any sin in conflict: though sin may trouble a man more when it inclines and tempts, yet it wounds a man more when it prevails and overcomes.

2. Actual dominion, though it doth not always conclude the absence of grace, yet it always impairs and weakens the strength of grace. 3. Because actual dominion, though it doth not always cut off the union, yet it may and doth disperse and check the comforts. It is an eclipse, though it be not a night. 4. Because actual dominion (especially of great sins, and over a David) is accompanied with great prejudice to Divine glory: the better the man is, the more dishonourably foul his offendings are.

**II. HABITUAL DOMINION.** 1. Habitual dominion decides the estate: the question of a man's soul is, whose servant he is, whether he belong to God and Christ, or to sin and Satan. Now, particular failings do not determine this, but the dominion of sin doth, his servants we are whom we obey. 2. There is no dominion in all the world so vile: whether you consider it—1. In the commands of sin; or 2. In the service of the sinner. The commands of sin are the vilest commands. For—1. They are illegal. 2. They are purely sinful: all its edicts and desires are but rebellions. 3. They are extremely unreasonable.

1. The service of sin: it is the most disloyal service in respect of God renouncing Him, denying Him His due, and conferring it on His only enemy. 2. It is the most injurious service to our souls. 3. It is the basest service. 4. It is the drudgingest service. A man who is a servant to sin, he is at the command of every lust. 5. It is a most unprofitable service. Though in some service there may be but an uncertain gain, yet in the service of sin there is a most certain and great loss; what profit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed (Rom. vi. 21). 6. It is a most uncomfortable service. How oft is the servant of sin in the depths of fear and in the heights of trouble; his very sinnings are more his torments than his joys. (*Ibid.*) *It is an*

*hard thing to get off the dominion of sin.* Sin is a strong man, it hath possession, and goes not out by entreaty or bribe, but it must be by force, by one that is stronger. I assure you, that the almighty God must reveal His own arm, and He must cast down strongholds, He must work a kind of a miracle, or else sin will still be a lord, and the sinner will be a servant to his lusts. A man may change any master soever, and with more ease than sin. (*Ibid.*) *A man may deceive him-*

*self about the dominion of sin:*—There are many erroneous deceits. 1. One is the unsensibleness of its power: when a man feels no violence of sinful inclination, no stirrings, no opposition, no commands, but there is a calm and quietness in his spirit and in his way, which could not be as he thinks if sin had dominion and rule on him. Now, this is a deceit; for—(1) It is most probable that sin hath the strongest dominion where the heart is most unsensible of the law and commands of sin. (2) This unsensibleness and quietness may arise, partly from the oneliness of sin, and partly from the ignorance of a sinful condition, and partly from the habitual custom of sin. Whether the sun doth shine or not, there are as many atoms and motes flying in the room, there they are really, though not sensibly till the light comes in to manifest them. When a man is in a deadly disease, he may be void of all sense of it. Nay, and as we see men in bondage and slavery, when

they are long in the same, grow unsensible, and the hand which is used to iron and nettles is not sensible of them. 2. Another deceit may be a freedom from many courses of sinful actings. Though a man doth not all evil, and his way or course is not universally spreading in all the kinds of sinning, yet sin may rule in that man, it may have dominion; forasmuch as—(1) Particular subjection is sufficient to set up dominion. Though a servant hath but one master, and doth not serve every man in the parish, yet he is a true servant in respect of that one master; so though the sinner is not at the command of every lust, yet if he be the servant of any one lust, sin hath the dominion over him; for it is not the multitude of sins which doth absolutely and necessarily concur to dominion, but a subjection to the power of any one. (2) A man may do all that service to one sin, which others do to many sins; he may devise, and study to fulfil it, he may cheerfully and greedily receive its commands; he may heartily love it, and go on in it, and for its sake oppose the sceptre and dominion of Christ, he may consecrate all his strength to the obedience of it. So though in some men many sins do rule, and in others some one only, if the heart obeys many or few, or one, it is enough to declare dominion. (3) Yet again, another deceit may be, not only declination of some sins, but also opposition; which a man thinks cannot possibly consist with dominion; for a kingdom is not, or should not be, divided against itself. To this I answer, that there may be notable deceit in this also; forasmuch as to that of exemption from great and gross sins: it is not the greatness, but the power of sin which makes it reigning; the princes in Germany have dominion, though the dominion of the emperor be more large. The least sin acknowledged, loved, served, sufficeth to dominion: the dominion of sin is most within the heart. (*Ibid.*) *No dominion in the world like that of Christ*:—1. None so holy. 2. None so gracious; He doth not exact beyond what He gives. 3. None so peaceable; His very service is a kind of wages to the obedient. 4. None so assisted; His commands are accompanied with strength and spirit. 5. None so rewarded; no man serves Christ too much or for nought. 6. Lastly, be thankful, for if dominion be off, then damnation is off. There is no condemnation (saith Paul). (*Ibid.*) *Differences 'twixt the dominion and victory of sin*:—First, particular victory depends upon inequality of actual strength, but dominion depends upon the fulness of a corrupt nature. Secondly, particular victory is a sudden act, but dominion is a more sober work. Thirdly, where the sinning owes itself not to dominion, but to particular victory, or tyranny, there the person, when he comes to himself, feels the yoke and would shake it off. 4. Therefore in the fourth place, if it be but victory, the person is not only troubled at his fall, not only loathing of his actions, but he is actively working, he is using his victorious weapons to raise up himself, to free himself again; he is grieved at the bondage, desires liberty, and will fight hard for it. Lastly, if it be but particular victory, the soul will rise again, and it will not rise without revenge. (*Ibid.*) *Differences 'twixt acts germinated and custom in sin*:—1. Where the renewed acts of sin owe themselves to custom, there the possession is both strong and quiet. 2. Where the renewed acts are acts of custom, there the acting is natural and easy. 3. Where the renewed acts owe themselves to custom, there a man is not easily brought off. (*Ibid.*) *How to be kept from the dominion of sin*:—1. For the first let us inquire what keeps up and strengthens the natural dominion of sin, and accordingly work against it. There are four things which do it—(1) One is ignorance. The blindness of the understanding is a principal guard of reigning sin. The devil is a prince of darkness. (2) A second thing which keeps up the natural dominion of sin, is a violent love of sin. (3) Another thing which keeps up the dominion of sin is error and deceit; there is a lie in every sin. (4) A fourth thing which keeps up dominion is custom. 2. What may demolish and break down the natural dominion of sin. (1) That which doth this, it must have a greater power than sin, for natural dominion goes not off but by a stronger hand. (2) That which doth this, it must be a contrary nature unto sin. (3) Again, it must be something which may gain the affections. (4) Again, it must be something which may breed a stiff and courageous resolution, that the heart will not serve sin, but will go free. And hereupon, against all inward and outward opposition, breaks forth into the use of victorious means. 3. Against actual dominion. Thus for directions against the natural dominion of sin. Now I proceed to some helps against actual dominion, which is the particular prevalency of a sin into act. Let me premise a proposition or two, and then you shall have the special directions themselves. (1) Actual dominion (I speak in respect of gross acts) is usually in respect of some particular lusts: which works with more strength in the soul than any other lusts. (2) Secondly, actual dominion is ordinarily



by such a sin which hath the advantage of a natural complexion, and outward condition, and occasions, and affections; upon these doth sin set the temptation, as an engineer doth place his battery upon such a piece of ground, which doth best advantage and further his shot against a city. A man's natural temper and complexion doth mightily facilitate his acts. Now I come unto some special directions against the actual dominion of a particular lust. First, preserve in thy soul a constant and humble fear, and that will keep off the actual dominion of thy sin (Prov. xxviii. 14). There be some graces which are, as it were, the guard of other graces: look as faith is a grace which feeds all the rest: so fear is a grace which keeps all the rest. 2. Get a sound and uncorrupt judgment: there be three cases in which a man is apt to fall under the actual dominion of sin. One is, when he thinks or says that the sin is little. Another is, when he saith that his own strength is great. A third is, when he assures himself of easy pardon and recovery. (*Ibid.*) **Then shall I be upright.**—*The anatomy of uprightness.*—That it should be the great bent, aim, desire, and endeavour of a man to be upright (Gen. xvii. 1). I am the Almighty God, walk before Me and be thou upright. I. **WHAT IT IS TO BE UPRIGHT.** The heart is upright when it is sincere, and then it is sincere when it is unmingled: there is a difference 'twixt adherence and commixture. To the purest *lana* there may adhere some thread or spot uncomely, but in commixture the qualities or substances are in a sort mutually confounded; sin adheres or cleaves to the nature of the most upright person, but yet it mingles not, it is a thing which the renewed heart is thrusting off; it would be rid of it, the new nature, like a spring, is working it off, so that a man may be said to be upright whose heart will not suffer any sin to incorporate or settle itself. Uprightness is a sound and heavenly frame or temper of a gracious heart or spirit given by God, by which graces are acted, sins are opposed, duties are performed affectionately, directly, and plainly, in reference to God, and not for by-respects. It is a temper or frame of the heart, a composition, as it were, in which methinks two things may be observed. One, that uprightness is not a single or transparent act or motion: I think that even an hypocrite, whose heart is rotten, abominable, may yet, as step out into actions materially good, so feel motions within him both against what is evil, and unto what is good, he may (either through the force and power of evidence and conviction in his judgment, or through the irresistible actions of his enlightened and stirred conscience, or through the great desire of a glorious blessedness) have many fits and inward humours of being good and doing good. But all this is passion, and not temper: the philosopher in his rhetorics accurately distinguishes 'twixt the readiness which springs out of a natural complexion, and that which ariseth out of a violent anger and passion which soon fades off, being not rooted in nature, but in distemper: so is it with the hypocrite. But uprightness is a temper and frame, like an instrument well tuned, or if that hit not full, like a complexion, which is a uniform (if not principle yet) instrument of actions. It is like that leaven, of which Christ spake, which invades the whole lump, it sweetly seasons and disposes the whole man for God, as the bent of the stone is to the centre, and of the fire to ascend. Another, that unrighteousness is rather a general influence in the graces than any distinct grace: I will not make this point a controversy, only, so far as I yet apprehend, uprightness is rather the temper of a grace, than the grace itself; it is not fear, but fear rightly tempered and ordered; it is not love, but love rightly set; it is not desire, but this orderly carried. It is a sound and incorrupt and heavenly frame of heart. A thing may be termed sound or solid either when it is real, not light, slight, superficial, or when it can abide trial: as true gold is really so and not in colour only, and if you reduce it to the touchstone you shall find it so: if you cast it into the fire, &c. The last thing which I would observe in uprightness is its end and scope. I pray you to remember that uprightness causeth a threefold reference of our services: one is to God's precept, that's the square and rule and compass of upright motions. Another is to God's glory, that's the spring which turns the wheels, the wind which blows the sails: it is for Christ's sake, said Paul: and whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, said he again. A third is to God's acceptance and approbation, so that God will accept, and commend and approve (2 Cor. v. 9); we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him (2 Cor. x. 18). Now I proceed to a second question, why we should strive and aim at (as David here did) and endeavour to be upright. There are abundant reasons thereof; I will deliver a few unto you. First, this uprightness is the great thing which God looks for (John iv. 23). Nay, secondly, this is it which the Lord looks at (Jer. v. 8). Thirdly, this seems to be

the only thing that God expects (1 Sam. xii. 4); only, fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart (Deut. x. 12). Fourth, uprightness doth bring the whole man unto God; it is that which commands all, and carries all with it. Fifth, God judgeth of a man by his uprightness. Would you be paid with counterfeit gold? doth the show please you without the substance? will the compliments of men satisfy you without a real friendship? will a gaudy rotten house content you, which hath no solidity and goodness? would you take the words of your servants, and their legs as sufficient? while their hearts are false in their callings. Nay, would you be content that God should make a show only, a pretence that He would pardon you, and help, and comfort, and save you; and yet deny you real love, real mercy, real comfort, real help and salvation, then think how God should take shows from you without uprightness of heart. Therefore I pray you take some pains with your hearts, bring them to the balance of the sanctuary, weigh them there, reduce them to the rule, try them there, whether they be upright or no. Let me premise a few particulars which may prepare and quicken you to this trial for uprightness of heart. First, there is no deceit or error in the world of more dangerous consequence than for a man to deceive himself, and to err about the right temper of his soul. A man may mistake himself in the depth of his riches, or the altitude of worldly friendship, or latitude of his intellectual qualifications and abilities; he may think himself rich, and favoured, and learned when perhaps he is not so; but these mistakes are about *nostra*, not about *nos*; ours, but not ourselves, and the danger may be only a tempest, but not a shipwreck. But for a man to deceive himself about his heart, about his soul; why, what hath he more? what hath he like them? They are fundamental errors; if a man lays a rotten foundation instead of a sound, all his building at length sinks to the ground. If a man sets forth in a fair ship, whose bottom is unsound and leaking, he loseth himself in the voyage. What a fearful day will judgment be! how will it make the soul to tremble, when it hath no more time now but to see, and eternally bewail its own errors and deceits! O Lord, saith that oppressed man, I have deceived my own soul, I thought myself thus and thus; but my heart hath deceived and beguiled me. Thirdly, an hypocrite may go very far, and therefore the more reason have we to see that our hearts be upright. Again consider, that it is a very difficult thing to be upright: though it be that acceptable frame of spirit so pleasing to God and so comfortable (as we may hear) to us, yet it is not so easy to be upright, whether you consider—1. That deceitfulness which is in man's heart (Jer. xvii. 9), *q. d.* there is not such a cunning thing as it, not a thing in all the world which can delude us so easily. Oh, how difficult! many by aims and indirect ends do often present themselves, that it is with us as with boys in writing, we draw many crooked lines, or as with them in archery, we shoot by-hither or beyond or beside the mark; it is not easy to do good because God commands it, or only because He may be glorified. 2. That spiritualness which is required in upright motions; I tell you that the very soul must act itself, if the heart or way be upright: not only his lips, but his spirit must pray; not only his ear, but his heart must hear; he must not only profess against sin, but his soul must hate and abhor it. Lastly, to be upright is a possible thing, a man may attain unto it. But, you will say, if the case be so, how may one know that he is indeed upright? There are many discoveries of it; I pray you to observe them, and try yourselves by them. (1) If a man be upright, he will mostly strive for an inward reformation of his heart. (2) If a man be upright, then a little holiness will not serve his turn. (3) If a man be upright, then a man will walk by a right rule. (4) A person may know whether he be upright or no, by the conscientious disposition of his heart about all sins. David, speaking of such who were undefiled (Psa. cxix. 1), and sought the Lord with their whole heart (ver. 2), he added (ver. 3), They also do no iniquity. If you be upright you will make conscience of secret as well as open sins. You will make conscience of the least sins. I conceive there are five things about our duties and services which may manifest the uprightness of our hearts, namely—(1) Universality. David did take this for a special testimony of his uprightness; that he had respect unto all God's commands (Psa. cxix. 6), and Paul thought it so, who did exercise himself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man (Acts xxiv. 16; Heb. xiii. 18). An hypocrite's obedience cannot be universal. (2) Constancy of obedience. (3) Simplicity of obedience. The unsound heart will square out his work according to the pay; his eye is much upon this, how will this make for my profit? how will it advance my pleasure, my credit? these things fire and inflame an unsound heart. For it is God's express will, and it will make for His glory: these (alone) are cold motives,

and weak inducements to a false-hearted person. But come and say, God will have you to do it, and if you do it you shall be highly thought on, you will be esteemed for it, you shall have much applause, you may hap to get well by it: why, now the unsound heart stirs as the ship, which hath got a right wind to drive it, and carry it on. (4) Spirituality of obedience. An hypocrite, he may do so much about duties as may manifest the excellency of his gifts, but he doth not that about duties which argues the efficacy of grace. But an upright person, there is fire and incense in his sacrifices; he must present living and reasonable services (1 Pet. iv. 11; 1 Cor. ix. 17; 1 Thess. ii. 4). If he prays, and his mind be drawn aside by distractions, and his affections work not with sorrow, hope, with earnest desire, and some confidence, he accounts that the work is not done, he hath said something, but he thinks he hath not prayed. (5) Humility of obedience; why, this doth argue the uprightness of a person. There is no person more proud of his work than an hypocrite. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *How to obtain and maintain uprightness.*

I. MOTIVES TO PERSUADE US. Means to direct and help us. 1. God regards you not, if you be not upright; His eyes are upon the truth. 2. The Word of God condemns you; if you be not upright, it will not acquit you. 3. Your conscience will secretly reproach and vex you in the day of your calamity. II. THE MEANS OF UPRIGHTNESS. Directions for the getting of it. 1. If ever you would have upright hearts, you must then go to God for them. 2. If you would find uprightness in you, then get an exceeding and predominate love of God and His ways. Love is of great force and influence to a man's ways and actions, is like the rudder which doth master the ship in the motion, it can turn and wind it any way; so doth love prevail with the soul; it hath a command over it. The want of uprightness comes from the want of love; as the falseness of a woman to her husband grows upon want of conjugal love; it is the love of the world which draws a man so often aside. If a man could love God above all, he would delight to walk with Him, he would be careful to please Him, fearful to offend Him, ready to obey Him, would be kept in for God, he would not make so many strayings, he would mind God's glory more. 3. Get to hate sin; a secret love of sin will draw the soul aside. For the second which respect the preserving means, take these directions. 1. First, if you would preserve uprightness, you must preserve an holy fear of God; I will put My fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me (Jer. xxxii.). 2. If you would preserve uprightness, then you must get and preserve humbleness of spirit. 3. If you would get and preserve uprightness, then get your hearts to be crucified to the world. Hypocrisy and worldliness are seldom far asunder. 4. Now, to all that hath been said, let me add a few daily meditations, which may be of great force to keep us in upright walking. (1) That God searcheth my heart, and still looks upon my ways. Whither shall I go from Thy presence? said David (Psa. cxxxix.). (2) That I must one day appear before God, and then all secrets shall be disclosed. (3) A little unevenness will mar the comfort of a great deal of uprightness. There are two sorts of unevenness in walking. One is habitual and allowed, which mars the just hopes and expectations of glory. Another is actual, which is a trip, a stumble, an out-stripping in the course of a pious walking. I confess it may befall the best, yet it will embitter our souls. All the good course which a man hath led, and actions which he hath sincerely done, cannot so much comfort him as many particular obliquities and unevenness may sad and perplex him. As in a wrench of the foot, the present pain shuts out the sense of all former strength. (4) That God is to be set up above all. It is an hard thing to ascribe unto God the Original of excellencies, that He is God, and that power, might, and glory, and obedience belongs unto Him, that He made us, and not we ourselves, and that our beings as they are depending upon His power, so our ways upon His rule; and He is Lord of lords, all are under Him, and, being the universal efficient, He ought also to be our universal end. God is set up above all other—(1) When His rule and Word sways us against all other. (2) When His glory is singly or supremely aimed at above all other things, and both these complete uprightness. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **The words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart.**—*Words and thoughts*:—The prayer speaks for itself, as the prayer of a truly righteous man. One might almost call that man a perfect man whose whole life was lived in perfect accord with it. For the majority of us, it is far easier to control one's actions than one's words. What mischief is done by the exaggerated denunciations of violent language, and by the false position of guilt in which strong epithets and expletives are



usually placed. All expressions of bad feeling are wrong, not because they are expressions, but because they spring from the bad feeling, and that is the thing of which we ought to be ashamed and afraid. The use of expletives has been put on a false footing altogether, and the way in which they have been condemned has done more to increase it than to stop it. Yet how very far better it would be for us never to use rash or violent or misplaced words. All habits of this kind are bad. What a safeguard the prayer of the text is against all corrupting influences of the tongue, and against lying. By the words of our mouth, how vast is the influence we may exercise for good or evil! Of all the common forms of sinning with the tongue, the most common, and perhaps the worst, is the sin of lying. There is an amazing amount of careless falsehood spoken. What gives religion its pre-eminence as a moral power is its recognition of a holy God who looketh on the heart, and in whose sight the pious soul longs to be wholly and always acceptable. The earnest desire to be right in the sight of God would give an immense impulse to the instinctive love of truth which belongs to our nature. The most vital part of religion is, intense desire to be made righteous, and entire trust in the strength and grace of God. (*Charles Voysey.*) *Acceptable words:*—Meditations into which a man puts his heart will surely prove the spring of action. The depths of this prayer are reached in the petition concerning the meditations of the heart. Meditation is only unuttered speech. We think in words. Yet the words we utter have a separate existence, and most powerfully affect the thoughts of our mind. Language has a reflex influence upon our thoughts. Thought is revealed in speech, but speech reacts upon thought. The Bible is fully alive to the importance of right words. Consider some of the essentials of acceptable words. 1. They must be truthful words. Our words must be in harmony with our thought. Our speech should be photographic of our thought. There are thoughts which seem to reach beyond the capacity of language. Speech is the clothing of thought, and, like clothing, should fit. Right thoughts would exclude—(1) All exaggerated words. This is a special failing of our own day. (2) All unreal words. (3) All flattering words. 2. They must be charitable words. There are men who have an instinct for searching out evil, just as hounds have for scenting out their prey. Evil ought so to sorrow our hearts as to make it impossible for us to blazon it abroad. Truth and goodness ought to be so attractive to us as to lead us to dwell thereon with delight and joy. Oh, that we had greater tenderness for sinful, wandering souls! 3. They must be godly words. Earthly speech may be seasoned with godly thoughts. Earthly things may be seen in a heavenly light. The spirit of a Christian may be seen in common ways, in ordinary work, in earthly speech. (*W. Garrett Horder.*) *The acceptableness of the words of the mouth and the meditation of the heart in God's sight:*—It is a strong evidence of the love of God towards sinful man, that any thing such a frail and erring being can do or say can be acceptable to Him. There are few sins which can be less excused, or which are committed with less temptation, than the habit of uttering improper or indecent language. It is our duty to resist such temptations, and this duty is to be performed by making the meditations of our hearts acceptable to God. To this end we must begin with striving to acquire, and with earnestly praying for, purity of mind. Our minds become tainted before we are aware of the importance and the value of cleanliness of thought. The voluntary meditation of our hearts now form an image, an anticipated representation of the state in which "we shall be." Whatever gives us most delight and heartfelt pleasure in this world is that which will give us strength in the next. (*John Nance, D.D.*) *Consecration of word and thought:*—I. THE UTTERANCE OF THE TEXT AS AN ACT OF SACRIFICE. A dedication to God such as any devout man may make both of words and thoughts. 1. There is nothing so much in our power as are our words. We cannot change our heart, but we can our speech. Perhaps some man exclaims that his temper has overmastered him; that he is possessed by the devil; that he cannot govern his own thoughts; that volleys of wicked words issue from his lips, and that his words cannot be acceptable to God. I reply, as far as "words" are concerned, you have simply and solely yourself to blame. However hot your passion, you are not forced to speak; for God has given you power to hold your tongue. It is pure absurdity to put down those curses or those noisy slanderous words of yours to your own depravity, or to Adam, or to the devil. You have only your present self to blame, and neither Adam nor the devil will bear a particle of the responsibility. There are certain devilish words that even you would not utter in the hearing of a child; there are others that you would repress if a holy man were standing by your side; there are

many which your instinctive reverence for the sanctuary would have the power to hush. These simple facts may do much to convince you that dominion over the tongue is given you, and that it is within your power to present to God even words that may be acceptable to Him. The Scriptures contain many words which it were acceptable for the most vile to speak unto God. 2. The meditations of our hearts. These may seem to be less fitting for sacrifice ; but they, too, can largely be brought into the control of our will ; and then we may offer them to God on the altar of spiritual sacrifice. II. HOW COMPREHENSIVE THE PRAYER. "All the words of my mouth." These include—1. All my soliloquies, my unuttered thinkings. 2. All my conversation, all my speakings whatsoever. 3. All I say unto God, in praise and prayer, in cries and ejaculations of gratitude and entreaty. 4. The meditations of the heart include even a larger share of human existence than the words of the mouth. These meditations reveal the habitual objects of reverence or distrust ; the whole empire of fear, hope, and suspicion ; of faith, prayerfulness, and love. Now, if this text is a prayer that all these things may be acceptable in the sight of God, it sweeps up into itself a large portion of our whole being. The prayer itself is a holy prayer, for "this is the will of God, even our sanctification." (*Henry Reynolds, D.D.*)

**The meditation of my heart.**—*Mental prayer* :—There are four kinds of prayer, distinguished by the purposes for which the soul approaches God : namely, to praise Him, to thank Him, to propitiate Him, or to invoke His help. But we note now another division of prayer. That which we have referred to depends upon the motive of the soul, this upon the manner of the act of prayer itself. The Psalmist, having prayed that he might be cleansed from sin, and "innocent from the great transgression," proceeds further to desire that he may become pleasing to God—"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight." In these words he provides us with the main division of prayer, based on the organ or faculty which is employed in it : by "the words of my mouth," vocal prayer is suggested ; by "the meditation of my heart," mental prayer is described. Mental prayer is transacted entirely within the soul ; vocal prayer employs the ministry of the tongue, or in some other way finds expression. The order of the Psalmist is that of acquirement and attainment. We learn in childhood first to say prayers, afterwards to think them : we govern our words first, and then bring under subjection our thoughts. All prayer is either mental or vocal. Mental prayer includes meditation and contemplation. Vocal is such as is used in the services of the Church. I. FIRST, WE WILL DEAL WITH THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION, and consider—1. Its authority, which is derived from the Scriptures. We have instances of it in the Old Testament, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, of whom it is first expressly spoken (Gen. xxiv. 63). In the New Testament it is twice told of Mary how she "pondered in her heart" the things that were told her. Christ Himself gives examples of this kind of prayer (John xviii. 2 ; Matt. xiv. 23 ; Luke vi. 12). Mary of Bethany. The apostles also (Acts i. 14 ; 1 Tim. iv. 15 ; Gal i. 17, 18). And so in the writings of the saints we have constant reference to the practice of meditation. St. Ambrose bids us "exercise ourselves in meditation before conflict, that we may be prepared for it," and in a striking passage describes the nutritive effects of meditation ; he says, "we ought for a long while to bruise and refine the utterances of the heavenly Scriptures, exerting our whole mind and heart upon them, that the sap of that spiritual food may diffuse itself into all the veins of our soul," &c. St. Augustine enumerates the steps which lead up to "prayer,"—"meditation begets knowledge, knowledge compunction, compunction devotion, and devotion perfects prayer." St. Basil enjoins mental prayer as a means of exercising the faculties of the soul. St. Gregory mentions the morning as a fitting time for meditation ; he says, "as the morning is the first part of the day, each of the faithful ought at that moment to lay aside all thoughts of this present life, in order to reflect upon the means of rekindling the fire of charity." St. Bernard represents meditation and prayer as the two feet of the soul, by which it ascends. St. Ignatius, in his *Spiritual Exercise*, systematised it. St. Theresa declares it "essential to the Christian life." 2. Its dignity. It involves a continuing in communion with God in tender and affectionate intercourse, growing into a holy familiarity and friendship. St. Augustine in his confessions records the joy which he experienced when his soul found its resting-place in God—"Sometimes thou bringest me to certain feelings of tenderness, and to an extraordinary sweetness, which, should it still increase, I know not what would happen." Such communion is surely a preparation for heaven and a foretaste of beatitude. It is said of St. Francis de Sales, that one day when he was in retreat, and holding

continuous and close communion with God, he became so overwhelmed with joy that at last he exclaimed, "Withdraw Thyself, O Lord, for I am unable any longer to bear Thy great sweetness." 3. Its importance. This is because of its rich productiveness in the fruits of prayer; we have found that, whether it be regarded as a good work which stores up favour with God, or as an act of compensation for past neglect, or as a means of adding force to our petitions, or as to its subjective effect on our life—it outstrips other kinds of prayer in the number and quality of its effects. 4. Its nature and exercise. There are preliminary acts, such as—(1) Adoration. (2) Preparatory prayer that we may have the aid of the Holy Ghost. (3) The endeavour to picture to yourself the event upon which you are to meditate. Then there will be called into exercise: memory, that you may have the subject of meditation before the mind; understanding, that you may reflect upon it and investigate its meaning; the will, for we have to stir ourselves up to this exercise. The will acts on the body, by causing the muscles to contract; on the mind, by determining what trains of thought it shall pursue; on the spirit, by holy resolve: this its most wonderful power. Such resolve must be definite, and its execution not delayed. And the meditation will end with appropriate devotions and inquiries. But mental prayer includes also—II. CONTEMPLATION. It is a gift which is very rarely possessed. It is said that, besides a peculiar elevation of soul towards God and Divine things, on the natural side contemplation requires certain qualities of mind and character, and is seldom attained except after a process of spiritual trial and purification; so that, in passing from the consideration of meditation to that of contemplation, we feel that we are going off the thoroughfare into the byways of religion. Some of its special features. (1) There is no labour in it, as in meditation, but the soul beholds truth intuitively, and remains gazing upon God. The amazement of delight fills the soul as it beholds the things of God. So that it is (2) a foretaste of eternal bliss, like to that which St. Peter enjoyed on the Mount of Transfiguration. (3) Another feature is repose. It is restful calm, and closes the senses to the external world. It is ever associated with the idea of rest. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. (4) The union of the soul with God is another mark, and is the first object of contemplative prayer. III. A DIFFICULTY IN THE USE OF THIS MENTAL PRAYER. It is dryness of spirit. 1. Its causes are—(1) The condition of conscience,—some sin, perhaps hidden, may have come between the soul and God; or (2) bodily health; or (3) the providence of God. He sends it as a spiritual trial, and this form of it is the most severe. (Job xxix. 2-4; Psa. xxii. 1, xlii. 5, cxliii. 7.) If we find no sin in the conscience, after diligent search, it is best to leave the matter in the hand of God. Only, never let dryness of spirit cause us to give up mental prayer. Let us not think that because we have not happy feeling therefore our prayer cannot be acceptable to God. God may delight in that which gives us no delight. As when the moon is in crescent, there are a few bright points still visible upon its unilluminated part; and those bright points are supposed to be peaks of mountains so lofty as to be able to catch the sunlight; so in the darkness of the soul, the withdrawal of grace is not total, but there are still, as it were, certain eminences, which the Sun of Righteousness now and then touches with His glory. But whatever the dryness or the darkness be, if we persevere, the light will return at last. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*) *David's desire*:—All wish to please—1. Some to please themselves. Whoever is offended, they must be indulged. 2. Some to please men. And this is not in all cases improper. "Let every one of us please his neighbour," but it must be "for his good to edification." 3. Some endeavour to please God. Such were Paul and his companions. "We labour . . . to be accepted of Him." And such was David. He would dedicate all his powers to God. A natural man cares for his conduct as men see it. But he makes no conscience of his speech, or of his thoughts. I. David's prayer shows HIS HUMILITY, he asks only that his works may be acceptable. II. HIS AFFECTION. He desires only to please Him. III. CONSCIOUSNESS OF DUTY. He knew that he was bound to seek God's favour. IV. REGARD TO SELF-INTEREST. It could not but be well for him if he pleased God. Innumerable are the benefits of pleasing God. (*William Jay.*) *Pious desire*:—In these words we are taught—I. THE INTERESTING LIGHT IN WHICH TO CONTEMPLATE THE CHARACTER OF GOD. 1. God is His people's strength. Of their bodies and of their souls. 2. Their Redeemer. He is so from the curse of the law; from sin; from the power of death and the grave. And at what cost of suffering was all this effected! 3. And we have individual interest in God. "My" strength: "My" Redeemer. II. THE PIOUS DESIRE OF THOSE THAT FEAR THE LORD. 1. It is an habitual desire, but felt more



strongly at certain seasons, as in meditation. 2. What David was persuaded of, that to the Lord everything was perfectly known. 3. About what he was concerned, that his words and thoughts might "be acceptable in Thy sight." God delights in such meditation of His people. (*Anon.*)

## PSALM XX.

VERS. 1-9. **The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.**—*A battle prayer*:—This, it is believed, is the battle prayer or litany which was solemnly chanted in the sanctuary on the eve of the great expedition to crush the formidable rebellion of the Ammonites and their Syrian allies (2 Sam. x.), and which was also used in after times upon similar undertakings. 1. To enter into its spirit we must transport ourselves in imagination to the old temple at Jerusalem while the special service invoking the blessing of Jehovah upon the intended enterprise is in progress. The courts are thronged with enthusiastic patriots, each eager to strengthen with his own voice the chorus of supplication for Israel's success. The king in his robes of royalty is standing by the altar in the sanctuary. He has just presented his gifts and offered his sacrifice; and now the choir and the whole congregation break out into this mighty hymn on his behalf, assuring him that in this day of trouble, occasioned by the revolt of his subjects or the invasion of strangers, the Lord will hear him, will defend him, will send him help from the sanctuary, and uphold him out of Zion. These his offerings shall be remembered, this his sacrifice shall be accepted; the desire, too, of his heart—the overthrow of the enemy—shall be granted. 2. They cease. The vast multitude stands hushed, while one voice alone is heard; it is that of the king, or of some Levite deputed to speak as his representative. In a strain of fullest confidence he declares the petitions on his behalf have been heard. 3. As the king ceases the choir and people again break out into chorus. (*Henry Housman.*) *The day of trouble*:—Have we heard of that day? Is it a day in some exhausted calendar? Is this an ancient phrase that needs to be interpreted to us by men cunning in the use of language and in the history of terms? It might have been spoken in our own tongue: we might ourselves have spoken it. So criticism has no place here; only sympathy has a right to utter these words; they would perish under a process of etymological vivisection; they bring with them healing, comfort, release, and contentment when spoken by the voice of sympathy. Is the day of trouble a whole day—twelve hours long? Is it a day that cannot be distinguished from night? and does it run through the whole circle of the twenty-four hours? Is it a day of that kind at all? In some instances is it not a life-day, beginning with the first cry of infancy, concluding with the last sigh of old age? Is it a day all darkness, without any rent in the cloud, without any hint of light beyond the infinite burden of gloom? Whatever it is, it is provided for; it is recognised as a solemn fact in human life, and it is provided for by the grace and love of the eternal God. He knows every hour of the day—precisely how the day is made up; He knows the pulse-beat of every moment; He is a God nigh at hand; so that we have no sorrow to tell Him by way of information, but only sorrow to relate that with it we may sing some hymn to His grace. The whole world is made kin by this opening expression. There is no human face, rightly read, that has not in it lines of sorrow—peculiar, mystic writing of long endurance, keen disappointment, hope deferred, mortification of soul unuttered in speech, but graved as with an iron tool upon the soul and the countenance. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Defence in the day of trouble*:—Commentators have positively perverted this whole Psalm. They have put it all down to David; but it is a beautiful dialogue between Christ and His Church,—He addressing her as her Advocate and Intercessor amid all her troubles. I. CHRIST'S RECOGNITION OF HIS PEOPLE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE. All have to bear trouble, but the believer has a God to go to. His troubles arise from his inflexible enemies, the world and its children, the devil, the flesh. And from his spiritual conflicts when first brought to conversion. The thunders of Sinai, the Slough of Despond—these are some of his troubles at such time. And when he is pardoned and hugs his pardon in his bosom, there are some troubles yet, through miserable backslidings. II. THE EXCITEMENT WHICH OUR INTERCESSOR GIVES US TO PRAYER. "The Lord hear thee"; this intimates that we

are already excited to earnest prayer. For our encouragement let us remember Christ's constant intercession on our behalf in heaven. III. THE APPEAL WHICH THE INTERCESSOR MAKES TO OUR COVENANT HEAD. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." Who is the God of Jacob? The God that gave him the blessing of the birthright, though he was the junior; the God that delivered him from the murderous hand of his brother in the day of his trouble; the God that enriched him with Laban's spoil, and gave him the desire of his heart; the God that protected him, and manifested Himself to him—his covenant God. How I have been delighted with the thought that Jehovah should recognise the unregenerate name!—for Jacob was the name of the patriarch in his unregeneracy. IV. THE DEMAND FOR OUR DEFENCE. "The name of the God of," &c. But you say, how will "the name of the God of Jacob defend" me? Try it; I have over and over again; therefore I speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee." Get encircled with covenant engagements and covenant grace, and covenant promises, and covenant securities; then will "the Lord hear you in the time of trouble, and the name of the God of Jacob will defend you." (*Joseph Irons.*) *The war spirit of the Old Testament*:—I. THE PROBABLE TIME AND OCCASION OF ITS COMPOSITION. They are related in 2 Sam. x. II. ITS CONSTRUCTION. It begins with an address to the monarch under the peculiar circumstances of the exigency. Then, with the words, "We will rejoice in Thy salvation," the speakers turn from prayer to the avowal of their confidence and of the spirit in which they would go to the war. Then the high priest might add the next clause, "The Lord fulfil all thy petitions." And now there appears to be a pause, and the sacrifices are offered, and the priest, catching sight of the auspicious omen, exclaims, "Now know I" (from what I observe of the indications of the Divine acceptance of the sacrifices—now know I) "that the Lord saveth His anointed," &c. Then comes a response from the people, encouraged by what they have heard. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses"—the very preparations that had been made against them, "but we will," &c. The whole closes by the acclamations of the people. "The Lord save the king! God will hear us. Save, Lord; let the king hear us when we call": we will pray for the king, we will call upon the Lord, we who remain at home when the army advances to the field. This reminds us of and illustrates a passage from R. Hall, entitled "Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis," a warlike, though at first sight it appears not a very Christian, address, written about forty-four years ago, at the time of the threatened invasion. Addressing a company of volunteers, he introduces a sentiment very similar to that which concludes this Psalm. "Go, then, ye defenders of your country, accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God Himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selected influence. While you are engaged in the field, many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon will grasp the sword of the spirit; and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping will mingle with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms." III. SUGGESTIONS FROM THIS REVIEW OF THE PSALM. 1. Although all this is very imposing and grand, yet it is not the ideal of humanity. We do not wish such scenes to be permanent or universal. It was all very well for the time, but it is not well now. This is not the way in which God should be worshipped, nor the feelings which we should carry away from His altar. The New Testament tells us again and again that its aim is something altogether different from this "mustering of the hosts to war"—this "Go, ye defenders of your country"—this murdering and slaughtering. War may be brilliant, but it is not a good thing for the world, for humanity. 2. In proportion as the spirit of the Old Testament has been imbibed by nations, they have been retarded in the development of national character, and in the realisation of the Christian ideal. Ceremonies, hierarchies, ritual, a national priesthood, a vicarious religion, an ecclesiastical caste—a special class of men being set apart to spend their nights and days in praying for the people—all these come from Judaisers. And so again with the national war spirit, the military art regarded as a profession, the consecration of colours, and the rest—these are Jewish, not Christian. We laugh at the Covenanters and the Roundhead, but where they were wrong was in imbibing the Old Testament spirit. 3. War is not always without justification, but we ought to shrink from it as an abhorred thing. 4. Let the Psalm remind you of King Jesus,

and of His victory and our own through Him. (*Thomas Binney.*) *Help in trouble:*—A sentinel posted on the walls, when he sees a party of the enemy advancing, does not attempt to make head against them himself, but at once informs his commanding officer of the enemy's approach, and awaits his word as to how the foe is to be met. So the Christian does not attempt to resist temptation in his own strength, but in prayer calls upon his Captain for aid, and in His might and His Word goes forth to meet it. **The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.**—

*The name of Jehovah.*—I. THE NAME OF JEHOVAH A CONSOLATION IN TROUBLE. No character is exempt from the ills of life. The highest dignity cannot guard off trouble; and crowns especially are often lined with thorns. Few plants, says an old writer, have both the morning and the evening sun; and an older than he has said, Man is born to trouble. But in the deepest, darkest, wildest distress, Jehovah is the refuge of His people; and His name soothes the keenest anguish and lifts up the most despairing. II. THE NAME OF JEHOVAH AN INSPIRING BATTLE-CRY.

"In the name of our God will we set up our banners" (ver. 5). Banners are a part of our military equipage, borne in times of war to assemble, direct, distinguish, and inspirit the soldiers. They have been often used in religious ceremonies. It is the practice of some people to erect a banner in honour of their deity.

In a certain part of Thibet it is customary for a priest to ascend a hill every month to set up a white flag and perform some religious ceremonies to conciliate the favour of a dewta, or invisible being, who is the presiding genius of the place. The Hindus describe Siva the Supreme as having a banner in the celestial world. The militant Church goes to war with the name of the Lord of Hosts on her banner. III. THE NAME OF JEHOVAH IS THE STRENGTH OF THE MILITANT CHURCH. "We will remember the name of the Lord our God" (ver. 7).

The world trusts in the material—in rifles, mitrailleuse, turret-ships, and torpedoes; but the Church is taught to trust in the spiritual—the mysterious, invisible, but almighty power of Jehovah. The material fails, the spiritual never. When the saint relies fully on Jehovah, and is absorbed in His holy cause, he is surrounded with an impenetrable defence. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The God of Jacob:*

I. ITS HISTORY. The character of Jacob is one of the standing difficulties of the Old Testament, because of the interest and love God cherished for him. David offers to us much the same difficulty: "the man after God's own heart," and yet so base and vile in his great sin. But it is the Bible which tells us what these men were. Its frankness is conspicuous. But David, after all, does not puzzle us as Jacob does. There is a vein of pure nobility and of splendid genius through David's character and life, which helps us to understand the relation of God to him. But Jacob's character fails to kindle a corresponding enthusiasm. He does not stand out before us a man of genius, as a hearty lover, a faithful friend, or even as a noble and gallant foe. A vein of trickery and treachery runs through his nature, so unlike David's frank and self-forgetful generosity. Stratagems are his delight; the easy refuge of his weakness. And when we find through life the same tendency to underhand tricks prevailing, we begin to wonder what God could see in the man to make him a prince in the heavenly order, and why throughout the Scripture the name God of Jacob, God of Israel is the name in which He especially delights. It seems to them the purest exercise of the Divine sovereignty on record. But it is sovereignty of the same order as that which moves Him to elect to be the Redeemer of the world. The spring of that redeeming love lies within His own nature. It arose out of the depths of the Divine nature, and must be based, we may be sure, on essential reason. God chose Jacob, and chooses to be called the God of Jacob, just because he was a man so full of human infirmity and littleness, mingled with those higher and nobler qualities without which the spiritual culture of mankind becomes impossible. Had God chosen only to be called the God of Abraham or Moses, and to take supreme interest in such lofty lives alone, alas! for you and for me and for mankind. Jacob is more within our sphere. What God was to him, we can believe that He may be, He will be, to us; thus the name "God of Jacob" has a sound full of comfort, full of assurance to our ears. That it might be so, we may be sure. He chose it. Now, see this when developed in history.

God, as the God of Jacob, did make Himself a glorious name in the earth (Deut. ii. 25; Josh. ii. 4-11). Their internal organisation under the constitution which God had ordained marked them out as a favoured people. There was nothing like them in the wide world, until the German races appeared and brought the same love of freedom, the same domestic affections, the same noble womanhood, the same essential manliness, to build on the foundation of Christian society. Again, Israel



was the only nation of freemen, in the largest sense, in the Old World. The people were knit into a brotherhood of liberty, with special safeguards in their constitution as a nation against the lapse of any Jewish freeman into serfdom, or even into penury (Deut. xv. ; Lev. xxv. 23-31). They were *facile principes* among nations, witnessing to the heathen around them of the blessedness of obedience to God. And what men they produced! The Greeks are their only rivals. But while Greece produced the heroes of the schools, the Jews produced the heroes of the common human world. Every man and every people is conscious of a relation to them, such as he sustains to no other race which has played its part in history. The lives of the great Hebrews belong to us as no Greek belongs to us. They are literally part of our history. How few know Greek; who knows not the histories of the Bible? They are our fathers whose lives we read there, our history, our hymns. Man's history is the elucidation of this title; the God of Jacob has written for Himself a glorious name in the records of the world. II. ITS WORK—THE FUNCTIONS WHICH THIS NAME FULFILLS IN THE CULTURE OF OUR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL LIFE. 1. The God of Jacob tells us, by the very name, that He is a God who is not deterred by a great transgression, or by great proneness to transgression, from constituting Himself the guide of our pilgrim life. If ever your heart dies down within you under the consciousness of an inbred sinfulness, which you think must alienate you from God's love and care, let the name of the God of Jacob reassure you. "Long-suffering" is the quality which the name of "the God of Jacob" seems specially to suggest to us. Jacob was a man of many and grave infirmities. And the God who came to Adam with a promise which implied a pardon came also to Jacob, and comes to us all. God undertook the guidance of that man's pilgrimage, because he was a sinful man, a man full of infirmities and treacheries, but with a nobler nature beneath and behind which He made it His work to educate by suffering, until Jacob the supplanter became Israel the prince. Jacob was as full of folly, falsity, and selfish ambition as most of us; but he had an instinct and a yearning for deliverance. God's promise rang full sweetly on his ear. The worm Jacob, trained to be a prince, is full of precious suggestions to us all. 2. The God of Jacob must be a God who can bear to inflict very stern chastisement on His children, and to train His pilgrims in a very hard, sharp school of discipline, without forfeiting the name of their merciful and loving God. "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," said the aged patriarch, reviewing his life course before Pharaoh. Why? Because through life he had been under the hard, stern discipline of the hand of God. And so, as his life was spent in learning, it was spent in suffering. God did not shrink from wielding the scourge to the very close. Then, he witnessed a sad confession before Pharaoh, such as Abraham and Isaac would have had no occasion for; for they lived better and happier lives than Jacob. But it is this very discipline which makes Jacob's life so instructive. It teaches us—(1) The thoroughness of the Divine method, that we have to do with One who will sanctify us wholly; will search out the very root-fibres of evil within us, and scathe them, whatever may be the cost. (2) Let the name of the God of Jacob assure you that there is no extremity in which you have a right to cry, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me." Jacob's life is surely the witness that the veriest exile cannot wander beyond the shelter of the Father's home; the most utter outcast cannot stray beyond the shield of the Father's love. There is no condition of darkness, of straits, of anguish, inconsistent with your standing as a son and God's tenderness as a Father. For—(3) The God of Jacob is the God who will bring the pilgrims home. "He is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." Led by the God of Jacob, your bones can never whiten the sands of the desert; your choking cry can ever be heard from the waves of Jordan. Mark the splendid and joyous picture of the end of all our pilgrim wanderings, toils, and pains, which is painted there. The Angel which redeemed him from all evil is redeeming us through pain as sharp, through patience as long, through discipline as stern. And He has caused all this to be written for our learning, that the hope of a final and eternal triumph over evil might sustain us through the conflict, through the wanderings, and assure us that in His good time the God of the pilgrim Jacob will bring us into His rest. Weary, worn, with shattered armour and dented shield, we may struggle on to the shore of the dark river. A moment, a gasp—and there is a white-robed conqueror, with the dew of immortal youth upon his brow, led by the angels before the Throne of God and of the Lamb. (J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.)

Ver. 2. *Send thee help from the sanctuary.*—*The sanctuary* :—I. IT IS THE PLACE WHERE GOD'S HONOUR DWELLS. When Israel would have the help and guidance of Jehovah, they made application at the temple where His glory was seen in the holy place, and where He had appointed to respond to their supplications. II. THE HOUSE OF GOD IS THE PLACE OF UNITED AND FERVENT PRAYER. The increased efficacy of prayer when united and fervent, and the assurance that it will have unity and fervency in the sanctuary, point out that place as the source of their help in the hour of danger and of suffering. III. THE HOUSE OF GOD IS THE RADIANT POINT OF SANCTIFYING TRUTH. From the lips of the living preacher go out those doctrines that operate to sanctify the hearts of men. And who dare hope that society can prosper where no hearts are sanctified? VI. THE INSTRUCTION OF GOD'S HOUSE IS THE GRAND AGENT IN THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT. An influence goes out from the holy place to affect all men, whether they will or will not be controlled by the influence. To the ungodly, public sentiment is an irresistible law. There is no means powerful like the house of God in the formation of public opinion and sentiment. V. THE HOUSE OF GOD SUSTAINS ALL THE OTHER CIVILISING AND HEALTHFUL INFLUENCES. Identified with it are a preached Gospel and the ministry of reconciliation. These all sustain each other. VI. FROM THE HOUSE OF GOD ARE SELECTED THE SUBJECTS OF HIS GRACE. Those only who frequent the sanctuary are at all likely to be regenerated. It is in the lips of a living ministry that God has pledged Himself to bless. Men bring misery on themselves when—1. There is a satiety of hearing the Word of God. 2. When the spirit of decay esteems the support of Gospel institutions a burden. 3. When there is a disrespect for the ministry of the reconciliation. (*D. A. Clark.*) *Help from the sanctuary* :—The name sanctuary means the holy place, and sometimes refers only to that which was the most holy place, but at other times to the tabernacle generally. It was made holy by God's dwelling there, and specially by the manifestation of His grace through mediation and sacrifice. To the sanctuary the pious Israelites turned when in trouble and in great emergency, specially besought the Divine protection by clinging to the horns of the altar. Something of the same kind we find in mediæval Christian times in connection with particular churches. In the Chapter House of Westminster there is a beautiful picture depicting a scene which was often witnessed at the abbey porch. The venerable abbot, with the elevated host in his hand, is staying the progress of a strong angry warrior, while behind him a woman and her children, with terror in their faces, are clinging to his vestments and claiming his protection. But we take the word sanctuary as in its common meaning amongst us to-day; as the house of God, the place of worship. Help from the sanctuary, therefore, suggests the spiritual strength obtained through the observances of the religious ordinances connected with the day and the house of the Lord. Christ blesses us through them. They are no charms or talisman, but simply channels of His blessing. I. WE ALL NEED HELP. Every soul has its own sadness. Some spiritual, through the conflict with sin. Others temporal, through the difficulties of life. II. IT IS A COMFORT TO KNOW THAT THERE IS HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY. For in the sanctuary we draw near to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as we appropriate Him to ourselves as our own God we find ourselves strengthened and encouraged. We are in our lives like a schoolboy learning to write, and every week is a page in our copy-book, and every day a line. On the first line, and in the sanctuary, Christ has set before us His own beautiful example, and we start out to imitate it. But as we go down line after line we too largely lose sight of that which He has written, and when we get to the bottom our work is all irregular and blotted, and the paper, mayhap, also blistered with our tears. Then comes the first day of the week again, and when we enter into the sanctuary Jesus speaks to us words of cheer and sets us a new copy, and so we begin again. Thus page after page is covered. It is poor work enough, but it improves a little every time, and it is much better at the end of the book than it was at the beginning, for at the bottom of the last page the Master writes, "Well done!" Thus the sanctuary counteracts the evil influences of the week. And there have been special blessings coming to earnest Christians through some particular portion of the service of God's house. The Lord guides His Word to the hearts of His people. He knows how to direct the minister to preach aright. See how minute are the directions given by which Cornelius was to find Peter and Ananias to find Saul of Tarsus in Damascus. And the Holy Spirit acts in like manner still. III. TO GET THIS HELP WE MUST COME TO THE SANCTUARY. I do not deny that we can get to God in Christ anywhere. But a particular promise is made in connection with the sanctuary. "Where two or three," &c. It may be difficult to analyse

this special blessing, but it is a reality. How lamentable, then, that so many stay away, and on such slight pretexts. IV. IF HE WOULD BE THE MEANS OF CONVEYING THIS HELP THE MINISTER MUST KEEP CLOSE TO CHRIST. For it is the Christ of the sanctuary that constitutes its value, and if he, on whom most of all the character and quality of the services depend, loses sight of Him, then the Church is reduced at once to the level of the Lyceum, and all spiritual power is gone. The soul of a saint cannot be nourished by a scientific disquisition. The best way to defend the truth is to expound it. Above all, must they know Christ experimentally. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **Remember all thy offerings.**—*Holy offerings*:—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" There are people who will say that we can give nothing to God, who giveth all. These are the selfish folk, who really mean, even if they do not say so, "Get all you can from God, God wants no return." Now, the Bible says just the opposite. The Bible says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." The people who talk about "the finished work of Christ," and who say that He has done all, and that therefore there is nothing for us to do, forget that there are two parts in the scheme of salvation. Jesus has indeed done His part, but He bids us do certain things also. We have nothing to pay. But would it not be base ingratitude if some one had been good and kind to you in trouble, and you had not tried to make some return, however small? Well then, "how much owest thou unto my Lord?" Do you remember what the Lord Jesus paid for us? Have we nothing to pay or to give to Him? You will answer that you have nothing good enough to give to Him. But you have; you can give Him what He asks for, your heart, your love. How, then, can we show our love to God, what offerings can we present to Him? In a word, one of the holiest offerings we can present to God is worship. And to do this should be our chief motive for attending church. How various and how unworthy—some of them—are the motives which govern us in this. The common notion about church-going springs from mere selfishness. The question is, how can I best honour Him who has done all for me? Above all, we offer an holy offering of praise in the highest act of worship, in the celebration of the blessed sacrament. In the service of the Holy Communion we take part with the saints and angels in heaven in worshipping God. Is there, then, nothing to pay? Oh, yes! a life of devotion, a life of thanksgiving; there is everything to pay, even the best we have. "I will pay my vows now in the presence of all His people," says holy David; and yet there are some who tell us "there is nothing to pay." Thus far we have seen that we can show our love to God by giving Him the offering of a holy worship. Again, we can make an offering to God by giving alms to His Church. God gives us all we have, our money, and our means of making money; and we are bound to dedicate, to consecrate a part of what we have to Him. Again, this false teaching goes on to tell us that there is nothing to do, and nothing to fear. You know that it is written, "without holiness no man can see the Lord." Now, do you think that you have nothing to do? Do you find it very easy to lead good lives; to keep yourselves pure, and gentle, and patient, and forgiving? Do you find nothing to do in resisting temptation, in keeping under your temper, in checking bad thoughts? But, as said a saint of old, "God, who made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." Jesus has done His part, but He nowhere tells you that you have nothing to do. Often when people say, "I belong to Jesus, I am safe," they are simply deceiving themselves. Some of the most atrocious criminals have talked in this way. "By their fruits ye shall know them." If you do really love the Lord Jesus you will try to obey Him. There is yet another offering which we can give to God, the sacrifice of self. Every act of self-denial, every pleasure abandoned for the sake of others, will be accepted by Him who gave up all for us. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **We will rejoice in Thy salvation.**—*Joy in God's salvation*:—"The joy, the gladness, the rhapsody, the exultation, the young heaven begun in the heart of the new-born convert is the nearest thing to Paradise that earth ever saw. On the day that our sins are pardoned God sets all the bells of heaven ringing, and then the bells of our heart chime in melody. On the day when God is pleased to blot out our sins, He hangs every lane and every alley of Mansoul with splendid flags and colours, and gilded lamps and bright jewels; then He bids sweet music play in every part of the city, and He makes the fountains run with wine. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) In the name of our God we will set up our banners.—*The banners of the Temperance*



*Reformation* :—There is the battle of life and its hard struggle, with which we are familiar. And there is that other battle of a higher kind—the battle of salvation, in which we have to carry on a warfare against our spiritual foes. And every great reform has been of the nature of a battle, because of the opposing forces arrayed against it. The Temperance Reformation is no exception to this rule. Many and mighty are the forces arrayed against it: ignorance and appetite, custom and fashion, prejudices and “vested interests,” and yet more. This is the battle we have to wage. But we survey the field of this warfare not at all with discouragement, but rejoicing in the salvation which God has wrought by the temperance cause.

**I. ENUMERATE SOME OF THE GREAT TRUTHS WHICH ARE THE BANNERS OF THE TEMPERANCE REFORMATION.** We know how useful signs, banners, and such symbols are in any warfare. What great service they render. 1. Now, amongst ours are abstinence and health. No one imperils their health by joining our cause, though some think they will. But it is altogether a mistake. There is no need for their coming as martyrs, for no one's health will be injured by abstinence. And how vastly health is promoted by it is a fact becoming more recognised day by day. 2. Temperance and safety. Perfect safety is not the lot of man, but relative safety is largely within our own power; and abstinence from all intoxicating drinks is one great aid to such safety. “Wine is a mocker,” and the victims of its deceptions are gathered from every rank, age, and calling, the most sacred not excepted. Therefore it is well to make ourselves, by abstinence from strong drink, as safe as we can in order that we may more fully execute the will of God and the work of life. 3. Temperance and charity; that is, love for our fellow-man. For the sake of others we should keep from that which does others so great harm. Love will ever swell the ranks of the temperance cause. 4. Temperance and piety. The one does not involve the other, but it is a great helper thereto. A practical connection exists between them, and temperance has brought multitudes to cast in their lot with the godly, and to walk with them in the heavenly way. 5. Temperance and prosperity. What hinders national and individual prosperity so much as intoxicating drink? What, then, could more help than abstinence from it?

**II. EXALTATION OF THESE BANNERS IS BINDING UPON US.** We are to set them up, not as the only things to be exalted, but yet as certainly amongst them. 1. Why shall we set them up? (1) As a protest against prevailing errors and fallacies which still are held by multitudes of people. (2) For publicity—that all may know what we believe and teach. (3) For the sake of propagandism. We want these truths spread. 2. Where shall we set them up? In the home, the school, the church, the press, the legislature, wherever, indeed, we may. 3. The means. By the living voice, by the printing press, by personal example, by social influence, by the franchise. **III. THE DIVINE SANCTION UNDER WHICH WE ACT.** We care for such sanction and we have it. His authority, honour, service, all sanction our efforts. Let us all be of those who take our text as their own resolve. (*J. Dawson Burns.*)

*A holy warfare* :—**I. PUBLICLY DECLARED.** A “banner” is a military ensign, and to set it up is a declaration of war. To “set up our banner” and to declare a moral war against wrong is what all should do. It is indispensable. We are ruined else. 1. Righteous. There are unrighteous wars, but this is not one of them. 2. Life long. It will not end until “the last enemy” be destroyed. 3. Glorious. It has a glorious Leader, glorious examples and victories. Unfurl your banner, then. It should be—4. Public. Let it be seen floating over the scene of your everyday life. **II. ITS ANIMATING SPIRIT.** “In the name of our God.” This may imply—1. A conscious need of Divine help. Jehoshaphat's prayer is suited to us (2 Chron. xx. 12). 2. A determination to follow the Divine direction. He is the Captain of our salvation. What a magnificent description we have of Him as a Chieftain in Rev. xix. 11–16. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The religious banner* :—A banner is a symbol. Hence its significance and value. Every country, every nationality has its banner, from the Roman Empire with its eagles, that aspired to universal dominion, to the smallest principality. The banner symbolises what is dear to the patriot heart, and every patriot is prompted to cling to it. Every soldier stands by his colours. Every religious body has its banners. They may not be visible flags; they may be symbols of different kinds. The creeds were formerly called symbols. Every Church has a creed or symbol of some kind. Some Churches may not have authoritative statements of faith and opinion to which subscription is required as a condition of membership, but every Church, every organisation, has its controlling thought, its characteristic faith, which in some form or other it expresses and makes its symbol or banner. Such banner

every religious body ought to have, and it should set it up in the name of its God; that is, under deep conviction that its banner symbolises and sets forth truths, principles, duties accordant with the will of God and helpful to man's highest interest and truest welfare—mental, moral, and spiritual. And to the banner thus set up it should be unfalteringly true. It should stand by its colours. Better have no colours than to have them without the manliness to stand by them. Neutrality, where important principles are involved, is pitiable; but better be neutral, better openly declare that you have no convictions, than not to have courage to maintain those you profess to have. If you have a faith, never be ashamed of it. Be ashamed of not having a faith, or of not bravely defending the faith you have. (*J. H. Heywood.*)

Ver. 6. **Now know I.—A point of knowledge:**—There comes a point of knowledge in the spiritual education of the soul. For a long time the soul knows nothing, can explain nothing, is groping after everything, but is quite sure that it is groping in the right direction. Then there comes a point of positive knowledge—a birthday—a day never to be forgotten. Such days there are in intellectual illumination. The scholar, opening his book, knows nothing; the first pages are weary reading; he asks if he may not omit a good many of the pages, but he is told that not a single word is to be omitted. The reward is not on the first page; it begins about the middle of the book, but only begins to those who have read carefully every word up to that point; then for the first time the reader sees one beam. Now his interest in the book deepens, every page becomes an enjoyment, and he is only regretful when the last page is reached. We know the meaning of this kind of illumination in the acquisition of languages. For a long time we seem to be speaking incoherently, even foolishly; the sounds are so unusual to our own ears that when we say them aloud to any listener we smile, as if we had made a possible mistake, or might be mistaken for persons who had altogether misapprehended their natural talent and genius. A little further on we speak, perhaps, with a shade less hesitation; then, mingling with people who are always speaking the language, we get into the hum and music of the utterance, and then venture our first complete sentence; and when it is answered as we expect it to be answered, a great satisfaction comes into our soul, and from that point progress is comparatively easy. These illustrations all help us to understand something about the religious life. When a man first hears his own voice in prayer it is as if it thundered. It is a terrible thing to hear the voice the first time in prayer to those who are naturally timid and self-obliterating. But there is a point of knowledge. The Psalmist reached it in the sixth verse. He felt the saving hands of God were under him and round about him, and his confidence was grand. After this, what would he do? He would “set up his banners,” that is to say, he would bear public testimony. There should be no doubt about which side of the war he was on. The fact of our having a banner is nothing; the heathen have banners, and are not ashamed of them; the thing to be noted is the *name* in which the banner is to be set up; they are our banners, but it is God's name. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) **That the Lord saveth His anointed.—God saved the king:**—So said David, for he was the Lord's anointed. “The Lord took him from the sheepfold,” and anointed him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance (1 Sam. xvi.). Again and again had the Lord saved David ere he came to the throne, and afterwards he experienced much trouble, so that he knew and confessed his need of the Divine protection. Persons are not less exposed by rising in life and spreading abroad in the world. I. THE SAVED. God is “the Saviour of all men,” but “specially of them that believe.” Thus He is called “the Preserver of men”; but “great deliverance giveth He to His king, and sheweth mercy to His anointed, and to His seed for ever.” If, therefore, there be (and who can question it?) a peculiar providence, no wonder that it watches with a special care over those in whose lives so many destinies are bound up, and on whose welfare the welfare of so many thousands depends. II. THE SALVATION. All are exposed to evil and danger. And only see now what a salvation God has wrought for us. Consider the greatness of the peril. III. THE SAVIOUR. It was the Lord, it was a Divine interposition, and undeserved by us: let our praise be sincere and practical. How much as a people we have to be thankful for. (*W. Jay.*)

Ver. 7. **Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.**—Remember the name of the Lord our God:—By the name of God is meant the various properties and attributes of God. Now, whilst

some trusted in earthly power, the Psalmist confides in "the name of the Lord our God." It would seem to an ordinary observer, if he were ignorant of the Gospel, that the name of the Lord would excite terror rather than confidence. If there be good in the moral government of God, how much of suffering, evil and sorrow there are, notwithstanding. How then can confidence arise from remembering the Divine name? We distinctly admit that there are attributes of God which, because they seem arrayed against sinful beings, can hardly be supposed to be subjects of encouraging remembrance. "The name of the Lord our God" includes justice and holiness; and these are qualities from which we seem instinctively to shrink, as though we felt that they must necessarily be opposed to rebellious and polluted creatures. And so they must be. If there be certain Divine properties, the remembering of which might be comforting even to the disciple of natural religion, undoubtedly there are others which can furnish nothing but cause of disquietude, unless there be full acquaintance with the scheme of redemption. It is in respects such as these that natural theology, if it would keep its disciples at peace, must forbid their recollecting the name of the Lord their God. These are points which must be slurred over, for to examine them deeply would be to destroy all foundation of hope. But it is not so with the disciple of revealed religion. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," there is no property involved in the Divine name from which we need shrink, none which is not actually ranged on our side, if we believe on Him who gave His life a ransom for the world. Did you ever consider what emphasis there is in St. Paul's answer to his own question, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" His answer is, "It is God that justifieth." What is there in the fact that "it is God that justifieth," which proves that earth, and sea, and air might be ransacked for an accuser, but that none could be found who could make good any charge against "God's elect"? Is it not because God is the justifying agent; not this property, not that attribute of God, but God Himself—God the combination of all possible perfections? If it be God that justifieth, the justification must be that in the effecting which holiness and justice concur. And therefore is it that all accusation is silenced; for if the satisfaction made to God on our behalf hath met every attribute of God, it is not possible that there should remain place for any charge. Justice as well as love demands our acceptance. Who can condemn when the Divine Judge Himself acquits, nay, pronounces approval? You should not fail to observe that our text furnishes a great criterion, and that we ought to test by it our spiritual condition. Is it, or is it not, our habit to "remember the name of the Lord our God," whilst others, either neglectful of religion or adopting false systems, turn bewildered to "chariots and horses"? It is, if with David we have "entered into covenant with God," through the Mediator: it cannot be, if we are still virtually aliens, living in the darkness and rebellion of nature. Oh, we too well know that there must be some amongst you whose only happiness is in keeping God out of their thoughts, and who are glad of any excuse for not considering His nature and attributes. Any "chariot," any "horse," which may bear them away from the contemplation of their Maker! What a state! To be afraid of meditating on that Being before whom they must inevitably appear, and who "has power to destroy both body and soul in hell"! If the banishing Him from your thoughts could finally keep you from contact with Him in His awfulness; if there were a "chariot," if there were a "horse," which would bear you away from His "everlasting wrath," we might not wonder at your perseverance in forgetting Him to the utmost of your power. Try for one hour to "remember God's name"—"God's name" as traced by natural theology, and yet more vividly by revealed. I know that you will be disturbed and appalled, I know that as one property after another of the Divine nature passes before you, you will shrink back, and be tempted to exclaim—Oh! for the "chariot," oh! for the "horse," to bear us away from this terrible God! But this is what we wish. We wish you to see in God "a consuming fire,"—a Being of terrors, and those terrors all armed to strike down and to crush you. But we do not wish you to be left in dismay; neither will you be. When "remembering the name of the Lord" has made you feel yourselves lost, you will hear with unspeakable gratitude how God laid your iniquities on His own well-beloved Son. If God out of Christ appeared to you "a consuming fire," God in Christ should appear to you as a "reconciled Father." (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *Divine and human trust contrasted:—I. THE CHARGE BROUGHT AGAINST THOSE WHOSE TRUST IS MERELY HUMAN.* There have been such always. Now, the guilt of such trust lies in the oversight of God,—regarding chariots and horses as sufficient in themselves. And we are inexcusable



in this, because God, though invisible, is ever perceptible to the understanding. And all such trust is irrational. It has no solid foundation in reason or conscience.

**II. THE PURPOSE.** "We will remember," &c. The trust of the Christian begins in memory. It acts as a stimulant to the believer, and loosens every other bond and makes it easy to let go all which the world gives.

**III. THE CONSEQUENCES.** "They are brought down, . . . but we," &c. Now, the results of trust in human power are sad and unexpected. It was so with Pharaoh and his army. But they are in accordance with the natural course of things. If we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption. But the Christian trust issues in this—"We are risen, and stand upright." (*W. D. Horwood.*)

**Chariots and horses:—I. THE VANITY AND THE VARIETY OF EARTHLY DEPENDENCES.** "Some trust in chariots and horses." They were the appendages of war; hence were forbidden to Israel, for war was not their trade. They had no standing army. They were always to be conscious of the inadequacy of their own resources, and thus to be taught to trust implicitly in God. Nor were they to be exposed to the temptation of conquest. They were never so triumphant as when trusting in God alone. But the text points to the tendency which men have to trust in the creature rather than in the Creator (*Jer. xvii. 5-8*).

**II. THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN PEACE AND COURAGE.** "But we will remember," &c. The name of the Lord is perpetually recurring in Scripture and has ever a deep and portentous meaning. The name of Jesus has now the same energy. "The Lord our God"—all the best blessings of time and eternity belong to the covenant of grace which is in Jesus. Is God our God? Can we adopt the words of the text? (*W. G. Lewis.*)

**Trust in chariots and horses vain:—**France, in the Revolution, hung up her motto—"Liberty, equality, fraternity." Napoleon changed it to "Infantry, cavalry, artillery," says PUNCH.

**Christian loyalty:—**Every good Christian is necessarily a loyal man. The subject now considered is, the insufficiency of all human expedients to secure happiness for a people unless God be honoured in the councils of their rulers, and His name be remembered by themselves. Human policy, if separated from Divine wisdom, leads to ruin and disgrace; but they rise and stand upright who "remember the name of the Lord our God." In what manner is a nation called upon to remember the name of the Lord our God? The right administration of justice and the true worship of God are the only sufficient securities for the permanent happiness of a state. It is the peculiar province of the law of God to instil a hatred of sin. Human laws may bind the hand, fetter the foot, and imprison the body, but nothing can control the heart, and curb the thoughts, and purify the motives by which we are influenced except the Spirit of God. He alone can subjugate the whole man. (*A. Watson, M.A.*)

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### PSALM XXI.

**VERS. 1-13. The king shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord; and in Thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.—***The feelings of the good in relation to the subjugation of evil:—*Take the literal view of this Psalm as a type of the moral one against error and sin, and we have—

**I. THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY.** Verses 1-7 are a triumphant declaration of some victory. "Thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head." Now—1. His conquest was a source of joy. "The king shall joy," &c. 2. His conquest was of Divine mercy. "Thou hast given him," &c. That mercy went before him. "Thou preventest him," &c., and transcended his progress. "He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." 3. His conquest exalted him to honour. "His glory is great," &c. And—4. Was connected with his trust in God. "For the king trusteth," &c.

**II. EXPECTATION OF YET FURTHER VICTORY.** "Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies," &c. In moral struggles, past victories promise future ones. Because—1. The opposition is weakened. 2. The weapons cannot be injured. The sword of the Spirit cannot rest nor decay. 3. The resources are inexhaustible—God's wisdom, love, and power. 4. The enemies already overcome are as great as any remaining; and 5. Each new conquest weakens the foe, but increases the strength of the conqueror.

**III. DESIRE FOR VICTORY OVER ALL ENEMIES.** And this shall be. "Be Thou exalted, Lord, in," &c. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

**The Lord Protector of princes:—**Here is God assisting, and the king trusting; God saving,

and the king rejoicing ; the king desiring, and God satisfying his desires to the full. In this verse are three remarkable conjugations. God is joined with the king. Strength with confidence. Salvation with exceeding great joy. Thus they depend on each other. The king on God. Confidence on strength. Joy of salvation. God exalteth the king. Strength begetteth confidence. Salvation bringeth with it exceeding joy. God is above the king. Salvation is above strength. Exceeding joy above confidence. 1. The only security of princes and states is in the strength of the Almighty. 2. God holdeth a special hand over sovereign princes. 3. Princes mightily defended and safely preserved by the arm of God must thankfully acknowledge this singular favour, and deliver their deliverances to after ages, that the children yet unborn may praise the Lord as we do this day. (*D. Featley, D.D.*) *Rejoicing in the strength of God* :—"Oh, it is good rejoicing in the strength of that arm which shall never wither, and in the shadow of those wings which shall never cast their feathers ! In Him that is not there yesterday and here to-day, but the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ! For as He is, so shall the joy be." (*Launcelot Andrews.*) *In Thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice.*—*The joy of the heavenly King* :—I. THIS JOY AROSE FROM A CONSCIOUSNESS OF NEWLY-ACHIEVED VICTORY. 1. This victory was achieved by supernatural power. Not by the ordinary tactics of military genius, or by the prowess of a human arm. The salvation of humanity is a Divine work. 2. This victory was granted in answer to earnest prayer (ver. 2). The agony of wrestling prayer is often turned into the rapture of success. II. THIS JOY WAS ACCELERATED BY POSSESSING AN AFFLUENCE OF DIVINE BLESSING. 1. He was surrounded with evidences of the Divine beneficence. God's gifts are God's love embodied and expressed. 2. He was invested with the most illustrious dignity (vers. 3, 5). Jesus wore a thorn-crown, but now He wears the glory-crown. 3. He enjoyed the consciousness of an imperishable life (ver. 4). He was raised from the dead to die no more. 4. He became the source of endless blessing to others (ver. 6). In and through Him all nations of the earth are blessed. 5. He exults in the Divine favour (ver. 6). The countenance of God makes the Prince of heaven glad. III. THIS JOY WAS INTENSIFIED BY THE ASSURANCE OF THE UNSHAKEABLE PERMANENCY OF HIS GOVERNMENT. 1. The permanency of Messiah's throne is secured by the Divine mercy (ver. 7). He who is most high in every sense engages all His infinite perfections to maintain the throne of grace upon which our King in Zion reigns. 2. The assurance of this permanency is strengthened by Messiah's confidence in God (ver. 7). The joy and confidence of Christ our King is the ground of all our joy and confidence, and the pledge of final conquest over all our foes. (*Homiletic Commentary.*) *A completed salvation, Messiah's triumph* :—I. LOOK AT OUR KING AS HAVING ACCOMPLISHED SALVATION. But few Christians believe in a salvation finished, perfected. The salvation in Christ Jesus is complete ; there is not an iota more to pay, not a single act of meritorious obedience left to perform, and not an enemy to combat but He has engaged to vanquish. Look at the manner in which He accomplishes this salvation. 1. By His suretyship and substitution. 2. By His atonement. 3. The entire labour is exclusively His own. II. OUR GLORIOUS KING INVESTED WITH KINGLY POWER TO DISPENSE SALVATION. 1. By His victories. 2. By application. III. THE KING REJOICING IN GOD'S SALVATION, SEEING THE TROPHIES OF IT BROUGHT IN AND BROUGHT HOME. My soul seems in an ecstasy of thought in the contemplation of this. Precious Christ ! It is all Thine own—all Thy work from first to last. (*Joseph Irons.*)

Ver. 2. *Thou hast given him his heart's desire.*—*The desire granted* :—In this Psalm the joy-bells of praise and thanksgiving are rung, and "Te Deum laudamus" sung, as after a great victory. It follows close on Psa. xx., celebrating the fulfilment of the petitions there offered. 1. We are reminded of the connection between desire and prayer. Desire is the mainspring of life. Could the infinite multitude of desires be annihilated, hope and effort would die, and the busy drama of life come to a standstill. Desire is therefore the test of character. Not what a man does or says, but what he desires, marks him for what he is, and makes him what he is. Desire, therefore, is the soul of prayer. We see here, perhaps, the deepest reason why God has ordained prayer, namely, that what is deepest, most dominant in man's nature, should be consecrated to God, and supremely refer to Him. 2. The whole invisible world of human desires (never the same two moments) lies open to God's eye. God can, if He sees fit, give us our "heart's desire." No lawful desire but He has created the means of its satisfaction ; and if He disappoints it, this is but

for the sake of some nobler end, some richer blessing. Unlawful desires are forbidden, not because He grudges our joy, but because their fulfilment would be our injury and ruin. 3. We have a practical test suggested both of our desires and of our prayers. (1) Of our desires. Are they such as we can put into prayer? Are they pure—such as God can approve; reasonable—such as we need not be ashamed to put into prayer; unselfish—such as consist with the great law of love; unpretentious—within the scope of God's promises? (2) Of our prayers. Do they indeed express the desires of our heart? Prayer without desire is a dead form; a featherless, pointless arrow that will reach no mark. (*E. R. Conder, M.A.*)

Ver. 3. **For Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.**—*God going before us*:—The word “prevent” is now generally used to represent the idea of hindrance. “Thou preventest him” would mean commonly, “Thou hinderest him.” But here the word “prevent” means, to go before. Thou goest before him with the blessings of Thy goodness as a pioneer, to make crooked ways straight and rough places smooth; or, as one who strews flowers in the path of another, to render the way beautiful to the eye and pleasant to the tread. God's anticipation of our necessities by His merciful dispensations. The leading idea of the text is expressed elsewhere. In Isaiah lii. 12, “The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel shall be your rereward.” Here is not only the idea of God following a man to shelter him and to protect him; but of God going before a man to make what preparation is necessary for his safety and comfort. God prevents us with the blessings of His goodness—I. WHEN WE COME INTO THE WORLD. II. WHEN WE BECOME PERSONAL TRANSGRESSORS. III. WHEN WE ENTER UPON THE DUTIES AND CARES OF MATURE LIFE. The word “providence” seems to represent something more passive than that which it is essential God should be to us and do for us. For example, you might make a provision for another, put that provision within his reach, and then leave both him and the provision you have made—and that would be providence. But that is not God's providence. He leaves nothing. He is with everything—with things great and with things small. God has not, you know, constructed this world as a clock-maker constructs a clock—adapting the machinery to work rightly without his oversight or his interference, but only needing a little attention on the part of the individual who owns it. God has not put this world in such a position as that. Every thing that acts, moves, and works—acts, moves, and works under the direct impulse of God. I know that men try to drive God away from His world, by talking of the laws of nature and of the powers and resources of nature. But as I understand the laws of nature, they are God's usual mode of working. He does a particular work in the same way, month after month, and year after year—that is a law. But then, the law is nothing in itself—the law is no power or force; it is only God's mode of doing the thing. You might as well talk of the law of carpentering, or the law of cabinet-making, in terms which would show you do not consider the presence of the carpenter or the cabinet-maker necessary to his work. There are rules of carpentering and rules of cabinet-making; but you require the carpenter and the cabinet-maker. Just so with reference to God. He works in the same mode, month after month, and year after year; but pray do not put the mode, the method, in the place of Himself, and speak of the mode of working as though it were the worker. And so God goes before us. He has been busy about that business of ours which we have just taken up as our occupation through life. He has thought of, cared, and provided for us. IV. WHEN WE ENTER UPON NEW PATHS. V. WHEN WE ENTER THE DARK VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH. VI. BY GIVING US MANY MERCIES WITHOUT OUR ASKING FOR THEM. What wretched beings we should be if God limited His gifts to our prayers! I know that sometimes we do ask great things, when our hearts are enlarged and when our lips are open; but I know that, at other times, we ask God nothing, and that our prayers are as poor as ourselves; and if God restrained His giving when we restrained our praying, in what utter destitution we should be! VII. BY OPENING TO US THE PATH OF HEAVEN, AND BY STORING HEAVEN WITH EVERY PROVISION FOR OUR BLESSEDNESS. Then let us praise God for His goodness, and let us imitate Him by seeking to prevent others in like manner. (*Samuel Martin.*) *The goodness of the Creator preceding the history of the creature*:—I. IN THE NATURAL PROVISION MADE FOR US AS MEN. Let us look a little at this, and see how goodness went before us, worked for us ages before we made our appearance on the stage of life. 1. There was a home exactly fitted for our reception. How exquisitely fitted this earth is to our senses and our wants! Do we crave for beauty!



What a gallery of magnificent pictures ! Have we an instinct for music ? What an orchestra, redolent with every variety of melodious strains ! Do we need sustenance ? What a rich banquet nature spreads before us ! Do we crave for delicious odours ? The air is laden with perfumes. Do we need facilities of transit ? There is the prancing steed ; by our side there grows the timber that will bear us over oceans, and there are the elements ready to our call. Goodness made everything ready here before we came. 2. There was parental love to welcome us. We were not sent into a world of strangers to make acquaintance with those who for us had no sympathy. 3. There were educational elements to develop our powers. Here was the piece of work waiting for us to do it. Here were men and women whose knowledge qualified them to instruct us : schools were here, and libraries. 4. There were wholesome laws to guard our rights. Goodness went before us and made this government. II. IN THE SPIRITUAL PROVISION MADE FOR US AS SINNERS. Pardon and spiritual cleansing were here awaiting us. Redemptive agencies were at full work all about us as we commenced our life. III. IN THE HEAVENLY PROVISION MADE FOR US AS DISCIPLES. What this world was to us before we entered it, heaven is to us now. 1. This world was unknown to us. How ignorant is the unborn child of the home into which he is to be introduced ! How little we know of heaven ! "Eye hath not seen," &c. 2. This world was exquisitely fitted for us. Its soil, climate, productions. 3. This world has infinitely more than we can enjoy. It is so with heaven,—its provisions are rich, varied, and unbounded. 4. This world welcomed our existence with love. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 4. **He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever.**—*Religion a life*.—In Christ these words are true of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are supremely true of Him who is the fountain of life. "He asked life of Thee." Is this true of us ? That depends upon what meaning we attach to the petition, "asking life." What we should ask for is life given to God here, in the hope of life to be received from God hereafter. We may put out of all hope of this life eternal all who openly reject it. It is the heart given to God which God requires. Religion may only too easily be in any man like the clothes which he so regularly takes off at night and puts on in the morning. It must be the life, the heart, the will, the whole inner man given to God here, through faith and hope of that eternal life which He will bestow upon His true people in the world beyond the grave. Our life in this world must be, as far as we can make it, a resemblance of His pure and blessed life while He was on earth, the perfect example of what every man ought to be who is made in the image and likeness of God. What He was perfectly and altogether, that we must be in part. Then shall we have life from His life. Do not suppose that any Christian can obtain that life without communion with Christ. It is as we live in and for Christ in this world that we shall find life—life from Him here, life with Him hereafter. (*W. J. Stracey, M.A.*) *Life, and life eternal*.—There is an evident distinction drawn here between what we may term natural life and eternal life ; between that life which we are now living outwardly in the flesh, and that life which is of inward consciousness, of spiritual experience. No one would contend that by "life eternal" is meant the indefinite extension and prolonging of this present mode of existence. The very term or condition "eternal" precludes the idea of transitoriness and uncertainty. In what does the distinction between life and life eternal consist ? The origin of life is, in a philosophic point of view, involved in inscrutable mystery. Life is that invisible, inscrutable, mysterious, subtle essence which not only animates solid matter, but from the moment of our birth to the day of our death is definitely apportioned us by God. We have each one of us a life-rent of this world, and no more. And this life is very dear to us. It is very precious, because of its fond affections, close friendships, many interests, enjoyments, opportunities, and, to some minds, certainties. Say what men will of life in their more sad and desponding moods, we do cling tenaciously to life. The passion for life is the strongest of all our instincts. To ask to die is unnatural. Physical death is not the punishment of sin. The death to which Adam was sentenced was banishment from the presence of God. Viewing life as it really is, immortality here on earth, and an immortality of this life present, would be a curse and not a boon. What, then, is "life eternal," and how is it to be obtained ? It is that hidden, inward, spiritual reality which, as in the case of natural life, finds its best definition in the language of Scripture—"This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Eternal life is to believe in Jesus, and that eternal life is given us

as soon as we do believe. Eternal life is the gift of God in Christ, given for the asking, as much, as truly, as consciously, as natural life is given or restored. It comes by faith, and that faith is a spiritual gift. I do not know that language can describe what eternal life is, any more than it can define natural life. In either case it is a matter of vivid consciousness, not of verbal definition or analysis. But eternal life is of present experience. "He that hath the Son hath life." There is a present pardon of sin, a present sense of forgiveness, a present joy and peace in believing. Possessed of this eternal life, enjoyed as it may be together with your natural life, it will sweeten its bitter waters with its own healing. It will ennoble, it will sanctify. It will make a life consecrated to God. (*Francis Pigou, M.A.*)

*The Gospel promise of long life:*—Though it be true that every man is fond of life, yet it is certain that very few appear much concerned about life eternal. The covetous man will not give, though it be but a small portion of what he has, to make his chance better of coming to everlasting life. Persons thus fond of life would have their expectations raised very high by the beginning of the promise in the text. "Thou gavest him a long life." But when these persons discovered that the promised life was eternal they would feel disappointed. This sort of message would, indeed, be disappointing to most people; and yet this would be only granting them what they asked, life, in much greater perfection and excellency than they asked for it. Men have got such a liking for the pleasures and profits of this bad world that, without them, the thought even of eternal happiness seems dull and tiresome. How many are there among ourselves who, if they should speak the truth, must needs confess that they care more for the shadows of enjoyment on earth than for the substance of it in heaven! No man in good earnest cares for heaven—has any taste or desire for it—except so far as he has a taste for devotion, and can delight in the thought that he is with God, and God with him. Now, this is what no one can do whose heart is set upon either such pleasure or such profit as are to be had on this side the grave. (*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times."*)

*Future life:*—When Carlyle and Tennyson were once together "the talk turned upon the immortality of the soul, and Carlyle said, 'Eh, old Jewish rags; you must clear your mind of all that,' and likened man's sojourn on earth to a traveller's rest at an inn; whereupon Tennyson rejoined that the traveller knew whither he was bound and where he would sleep on the night following." The future life was a most interesting and most firmly held article of faith with Tennyson. (*Christian Commonwealth.*)

**Ver. 5. His glory is great in Thy salvation.**—*The glory of God:*—In this Psalm the poet is giving thanks for victory. The soldiers are returning from war, and are met by a chorus of maidens shouting praise to the delivering God. The poetry is not equal to the moral enthusiasm of the occasion. We are called upon to contemplate God's glory as being great in human salvation. We thus enjoy the basis and the application of the thought. It would seem to be beneath Almighty God to care for a world so small and foolish as ours. It is not for us to estimate even our own worth. It does not become us to say that the world is insignificant, mean, or worthless; it is the work of God. What God has thought it worth His while to make, He may well think it worth His while to redeem. We do not see the whole world, nor do we comprehend all the issues of its discipline and nurture. When Jesus sees the travail of His soul He shall be satisfied. To save one soul is glory enough for any mortal man. What must it be to save the souls of all men, the souls of the ages and centuries incomputable? It is the delight of God to save, to redeem, to construct; the function of the enemy is to overthrow, to weaken, to debase, and to bring all life into dishonour. The course which the enemy has taken is the easier, since it is always easier to destroy than to construct. We glorify God by our goodness. God does not exist to be glorified in any sense of being merely hailed and saluted by songs and rapturous applause. When we are most quiet we are most really glorifying God. By meekness, by pureness, by gentleness, by quiet spiritual wisdom, by accepting the lot of life in a spirit of self-sacrifice, we may be bringing true glory to God. Do not think of the glory of God in any merely magnificent sense. We must change our definition of magnificence. In the sight of heaven it may be magnificent to be poor in spirit, gentle, and meek; and it may be mean and contemptible to own estates and crowns and sceptres. It is upon moral emotion, aspiration, and service that God sets His seal of blessing. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever : Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.—*Exceeding gladness*:—You have heard a great many sermons upon the Man of Sorrows, you cannot have heard too many ; but probably you have never listened to a discourse upon the Man of Joys ! I venture thus to name the Christ of God. We do not meditate enough upon the happiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, it was for the joy set before Him that He endured the Cross ; and the expectation of joy is joy. The light of that expectation shone on His daily path. Sin is the mother of sorrow, and Jesus knew no sin. He was the Prince of Peace, even when He was despised of men. He had the joy of knowing that His Father heard Him always, and that His every word and act were blessings to fallen men. A man cannot be full of such benevolence as that of Christ and be utterly miserable. Unselfishness necessarily brings with it a measure of joy. The fountain which yields such streams of blessing has its own flash and sparkle ; we feel sure of it. As pearls may lie in plenty in caverns over which there rolls a dread tempestuous sea, so there slept in the heart of Jesus treasures of joy even when the ocean of His holy soul was lashed with hurricanes of woe. And what must not His joy be now in heaven ! To this the text and the verses preceding primarily refer. As God, as Mediator, He is filled with joy ; for His work is finished. “Consummatum est” is written at the foot of His throne. And He is the fountain of priceless, numberless, endless blessings to men. “Thou hast made Him blessings for ever,” for so our text may be read. It is ever good to be the channel of blessing to others ; what, then, must be the joy of Christ ? Think, too, of His joy in the conversion, the comfort, the justification, the salvation of every soul that comes to Him. We read, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” Nearly all readers take this as telling of the angels’ joy. And no doubt they do rejoice. But the Word does not say so. It says, “There is joy in the presence of the angels” ; that is to say, they are present where there is joy, they look upon the face of Christ, and see the joy which fills His heart. And He has joy in all the deeds of His saved people, and in their patient suffering, and especially in their joy. He is the blessed Leader of a blessed company. And now, turning to His people—I. THAT GLADNESS IS THE PECULIAR PRIVILEGE OF SAINTS. Why should we not be glad ? 1. It is all right between us and God. There is no quarrel between the believing soul and God. And—2. Many are their present solaces. We can count our sorrows, we are quite “au fait” at adding them up. But recapitulate your joys with equal readiness. Why not ? Review the shining ranks of your mercies. Are they not new every morning ? I heard a brother in a prayer meeting say, “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we desire to be glad” ; and I wanted to jump down that man’s throat, and pull that passage back again, and put it into its natural shape. What business had the brother to mend the Bible and talk such wretched stuff ? “Whereof we desire to be glad” ! Why, if the Lord has done great things for us, we are glad. 3. We have a brilliant future before us. And—4. All blessings secured to them. In the parable it is said, “they began to be merry,” and it is not said they ever left off. Let us also begin. II. THEIR GLADNESS IS OF A PECULIAR SORT. 1. God has wrought it. 2. It is permanent. 3. Exceeding. Who would think it to see many Christians ? I am told that many shopkeepers are so poor that they put the most of their goods in the shop window ; but this is a method which few Christians follow, for the opposite is the fact ; their window is badly set out, and yet they have a costly stock upon their shelves. The children of this world are wiser in their generation in this as in other things. I would recommend such believers to dress their windows a little, and show some of their better things. Put your ashes into the backyard, but pour out the oil of joy in the parlour. Let people see it. 4. It comes to us in one way—“with Thy countenance.” Have you not sometimes been made very glad with the look of a friend’s face ? But what must the countenance of God be to us, when He smiles on us as reconciled, as approving us, when listening to us ? 5. But through many channels. Read the Psalm—“The King shall joy in Thy strength,” and “in Thy salvation.” Answers to prayer are told of. Preventing with the blessings of goodness, giving us mercies before we seek them. Then, be glad in the Lord, as we are bound to be.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
Who hath blessed us with such blessings, all uncounted and unpriced ;  
Let our high and holy calling, and our strong salvation be  
Theme of never-ending praises, God of sovereign grace, to Thee.”

(C. H. Spurgeon.)



*The light of God's favour*.—Flowers, when deprived of the rays of the sun, lose their bright colours, and become pale and sickly. This is generally seen in the night-blossoming plants, which are, for the most part, pale and unattractive. The soul that has not found God will lose all joy, and the beauty of life will fade without the presence and love of Christ. If it is to flourish, it must be ever basking in the healing rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

Vers. 8, 9. *Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies.*—*The exposure and punishment of sin*.—I. THE EXPOSURE OF SIN IS INEVITABLE. Iniquity delights in cunning, and is itself a masterpiece of cunning. It may succeed in deluding its victims, and for a time escape detection. But there is One to whom every detail of the plot is fully known. Sin is often its own detective. An unguarded word, a suspicious sign, an unconscious oversight, will unmask the most skilfully disguised plans, and lead to exposure and misery. It is the theme of many a ballad, how the cranes aided in the discovery of the assassins of Idycus, the poet. Recently the house of the Caliph of the Ben Oreazen in Algeria was entered by a band of robbers, and a box containing 25,000 francs stolen. In their haste to escape the thieves left behind them an Arab cake bearing a particular mark, which one of the bakers of the town recognised as the sign used by Ben Xerapas, it being the custom for each family, in sending their bread to the oven, to mark it so as to distinguish the loaves. The police acted on the information, and, descending on a certain hut, caught the robbers asleep, with a portion of the plunder still in their possession. A simple Arab cake was the insignificant agent of discovery and exposure. II. THE EXPOSURE OF SIN WILL EXTEND TO THE INMOST FEELINGS OF THE HEART. "Those that hate Thee." That sin is not always the worst which is most apparent. III. THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN WILL BE TERRIBLE AND COMPLETE. 1. It will be terrible. The sins of the impenitent wicked will supply fuel to the fire of their own sufferings, and perhaps be used as an instrument for punishing others. 2. It will be complete. "Swallow them up in His wrath." Nations are an example—Antediluvians, Sodomites, Jews. Individuals are an example—Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Saul, and Judas. (*Homiletic Commentary.*) *Enemies found out by God*.—Oh, what a wonderful prophecy that is! Christ's hand shall find out all His enemies. If they hide themselves, He shall discover them. If they cover themselves with chain armour, yet still His hand will find out their vulnerable parts, and touch their very souls until they melt with fear. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 9. *Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger.*—*The deluge of fire*.—How, then, shall it fare with sinners when, after all, shall come that general fire so often foretold, which shall either fall from heaven or ascend out of hell, or (according to Albertus Magnus) proceed from both, and shall devour and consume all it meets with? Whither shall the miserable fly when that river of flames or (to say better) that inundation and deluge of fire shall so encompass them, as no place of surety shall be left; where nothing can avail but a holy life; when all besides shall perish in that universal ruin of the whole world? What lamentations were in Rome when it burnt for seven days together! What shrieks were heard in Troy when it was wholly consumed with flames! What howling and astonishment in Pentapolis when those cities were destroyed with fire from heaven! What weeping was there in Jerusalem when they beheld the house of God, the glory of their kingdom, the wonder of the world, involved in fire and smoke! Imagine what these people felt; they saw their houses and goods on fire, and no possibility of saving them: when the husband heard the shrieks and cries of his dying wife; the father, of his little children, and, unawares, perceived himself so encompassed with flames that he could neither relieve them nor free himself. (*Jeremy Taylor.*) *God's anger*.—I have read that a frown of Queen Elizabeth killed Sir Christopher Hatton, the Lord Chancellor of England. What, then, shall the frowns of the King of nations do? If the rocks rend, the mountains melt, and the foundations of the earth tremble under His wrath, how will the ungodly sinner appear when He comes in all His royal glory to take vengeance on all that knew Him not, and that obeyed not His glorious Gospel? (*Charles Bradbury.*)

Ver. 11. *For they intended evil against Thee, . . . which they are not able to perform.*—*A memorable instance of intended evil that the wicked were not able to perform*.—At Rome the news of this great blow (given by the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day) was hailed with extravagant manifestations of joy; the Pope

(Gregory XII.) and cardinals went in state to return thanks to heaven for this signal mercy, and medals were struck in its honour. Philip II. extolled it as one of the most memorable triumphs of Christianity, compared it to the splendid victory of Lepanto, and boasted that the total ruin of Protestantism was now finally assured. Nevertheless, this great wickedness, like all state crimes, was quite ineffectual for the purpose toward which it was directed. The Huguenots had lost their ablest leaders: they were stunned, confounded, scattered, weakened, but they were by no means wholly crushed. As soon as they recovered from their consternation they once more rushed to arms. . . . The persecuted party once more raised their heads, and within a year from the date of the great massacre were in a position to address the king in bolder and more importunate language than at any former period of the contest. . . . The full and public exercise of the reformed religion was authorised throughout the kingdom; the parliaments were to consist of an equal number of Protestant and Catholic judges; all sentences passed against the Huguenots were annulled, and the insurgents were pronounced to have acted for the good of the king and kingdom; eight towns were placed in their hands for an unlimited period; and the States-General were to be convoked within six months. Such were the conditions of the "Peace of Monsieur," as it was termed, which was signed on the 6th of May 1576—less than four years after that frightful massacre by which it was hoped that the Huguenot faction would be finally extirpated from France. (*Students' France.*)

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### PSALM XXII.

VERS. 1-31. *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?—The prophetic image of the Prince of sufferers:—*Who is the sufferer whose wail is the very voice of desolation and despair, and who yet dares to believe that the tale of his sorrow will be a gospel for the world? The usual answers are given. The title ascribes the authorship to David, and is accepted by Delitzsch and others. Hengstenberg and his followers see in the picture the ideal righteous man. Others think of Hezekiah or Jeremiah, with whose prophecies and history there are many points of connection. The most recent critics find here the personalised genius of Israel, or more precisely, the followers of Nehemiah, including the large-hearted Psalmist. (*Cheyne, Orig. of Psall.*, 264.) On any theory of authorship the startling correspondence of the details of the Psalmist's sufferings with those of the Crucifixion has to be accounted for. How startling that correspondence is, both in the number and minuteness of its points, need not be insisted on. The recognition of these points in the Psalm as prophecies is one thing, the determination of their relation to the Psalmist's own experience is quite another. It is taken for granted in many quarters that every such detail in prophecy must describe the writer's own circumstances, and the supposition that they may transcend these is said to be "psychologically impossible." But it is somewhat hazardous for those who have not been subjects of prophetic inspiration to lay down canons of what is possible and impossible in it, and there are examples enough to prove that the relation of the prophets' speech to their consciousness and circumstances was singularly complex, and not to be unravelled by any such *obiter dicta* as to psychological possibilities. They were recipients of messages, and did not always understand what the "spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." Theories which neglect that aspect of the case do not front all the facts. Certainty as to the authorship of this Psalm is probably unattainable. How far its words fitted the condition of the singer must therefore remain unsettled. But that these minute and numerous correspondences are more than coincidences it seems perverse to deny. The present writer, for one, sees shining through the shadowy personality of the Psalmist the figure of the Prince of sufferers, and believes that whether the former's complaints applied in all their particulars to him, or whether there is in them a certain "element of hyperbole" which becomes simple fact in Jesus's sufferings, the Psalm is a prophecy of Him and them. In the former case the Psalmist's experience, in the latter case his utterances, were divinely shaped so as to prefigure the sacred sorrows of the Man of Sorrows. To a reader who shares in this understanding of the Psalm it must be holy ground, to be trodden reverently and with thoughts adoringly fixed on Jesus. Cold analysis is out of place. (*A. Mac-*

*laren, D.D.) Summary of contents :—*The exclamation from the Cross—"My God," &c., led us to consider the Lord Jesus as our Surety, standing at His Father's judgment-seat, and, conscious of innocence, inquiring what new charge was laid against Him to cause this new and most severe affliction, the hiding of His Father's countenance. We concluded that one reason why our Lord so earnestly cried to His Father was that He might ascribe to Him the glory of His deliverance, being unwilling to appropriate it to Himself by any exertion of His own power. And we found that the whole verse comprised three inquiries, to which we conceived these to be appropriate answers—First, Why hast Thou forsaken Me? Because Thou art bearing the sins of the world. Second, Why art Thou so far from helping Me? That the victory may be altogether Thine own. And third, Why art Thou so far from the words of My roaring? That Thou mayest learn all the required obedience by the things which Thou art suffering. We perceived that our Lord, in continuing His supplications, complained to His Father, but would not complain against Him; and that He fully acquitted Him of unkindness or injustice, by subjoining this filial and beautiful acknowledgment, "But Thou continuest holy." In the fulness of His sorrow our Lord next contrasted His own experience with that of the Father's, whose prayers were heard, and whose expectations were not confounded. He denominated Himself a worm, allied by His human nature to the meanest part of the creation—a crimson-coloured worm, covered with the imputed guilt of men, and He regarded Himself as "no man"; neither what man is by sin, nor what man was intended to be by his Creator. Our Lord's life in the flesh, we saw, might be illustrated by the heathen doctrine of metempsychosis; for He brought the recollections of the world of glory into this state of being; and therefore human life must have appeared, to His eyes, infinitely more mean, wretched, and loathsome than we can possibly conceive. We were next led to contemplate the enumerated mental sufferings of our much-tried Lord—the reproaches with which He was assailed, the mockery by which He was insulted, and the taunts which wounded His spirit to the quick. In the 9th and 10th verses we considered that pathetic and touching appeal which our dying Redeemer made to the heart of His Father, arguing from the helplessness of His infancy to the helplessness of His manhood; and casting the latter upon that paternal care which had provided for the former. We perceived how earnestly our Lord followed up this appeal with renewed entreaty for His Father's presence, expressing this great and only desire of His heart in these words, "Be not far from Me." The corporeal sufferings of the Man of Sorrows were next brought to our notice. The assault and encompassing of His enemies on every side was the first particularised; where also we considered the assaults of Satanic hosts upon the spirit of our Lord. Consequent on this assault succeeded universal faintness over His frame, complete languor and an extreme exhaustion, with intense and burning thirst. The piercing of our Lord's sacred body, in His hands and feet, was then considered, and the lingering death by crucifixion was described. Extended on the Cross, the emaciated state of the Saviour's worn-out frame was exposed to view, and all His bones might be told. In this condition He was subjected to the insulting gaze of the multitude. The soldiers also seized every article of His clothing; they parted His garments among them, and cast lots upon His vesture. Urged by these various and sore afflictions, and desiring with intense anxiety to enjoy again before He died the light and peace of His Father's presence, our blessed Saviour, in the next three verses, prayed with the most vehement importunity for a speedy and immediate answer. And whilst He was yet praying His Father granted His petition. Light dawned upon His soul. Darkness was dispelled from the face of nature, and from the heart of the Redeemer. And, as though issuing from a kind of spiritual death, and enjoying a spiritual resurrection, our Divine Surety exclaimed, "Thou hast heard Me." Importunity prevailed with God. The whole tone of feeling and sentiment in the Psalm becomes changed from this verse. Gratitude and thanksgiving occupy all the remaining portion. The Saviour, as it were, from the Cross, invited the members of His Church to join His eucharistic song. . . . He prospectively beheld the conversion of the world and the establishment of His own glorious kingdom. And the Psalm represents the Saviour as solacing His dying spirit, in the midst of His enemies, with the assurance of a holy and numerous seed, who should be counted to Him for a posterity. He heard, as it were, from His Cross, the song of the redeemed. (*John Stevenson.*) *The great Sufferer and His relief:*—This Psalm sets forth the last extremity of human suffering, yet without any confession of sin, and closes with the sure hope of deliverance. We consider it an idealised description of the great Sufferer. I. THE COMPLAINT (vers. 1-10).



The cry with which the Psalm opens is not an utterance of impatience or despair, but of grief and entreaty. It is the question of faith as well as of anguish. The second line suggests the great chasm between His outcry and the help He implores. God stands afar off, *i.e.* withholds His help. In the olden times the fathers trusted, and were not put to shame; why is the present case made an exception? It is such, for instead of being helped He is left to be reproached and despised; all the spectators join in derision. But faith turns the mockery of foes into an argument for deliverance. II. THE PRAYER AGAINST VIOLENCE (vers. 11-21). Having shown that He was justified in expecting Divine aid, He now shows that the necessity for it exists. It was no time for God to be far off, when distress was so near and there was no other helper. The figures that follow are taken from pastoral life. III. THE EXPRESSION OF THANKS AND HOPE (vers. 22-31). The Sufferer's certainty of deliverance is shown by His intention to give thanks for it. This will be done, not in private, but before the whole nation. . . . The experience here recorded, alike of sorrows and of joy, far transcends anything which we have reason to think that David passed through. (*Talbot W. Chambers, D.D.*) *A picture of suffering sainthood.*—I. THE PRAYER OF SUCH SUFFERER. In Him who was "the Man of Sorrows" it finds its chief fulfilment. 1. The sufferings; they are—(i) Spiritual, through feeling of God's desertion of Him (Matt. xxvii. 46). In regard to Christ, it was not a fact that God had deserted Him, but He felt as if it were so. And of God's disregard of His prayer (ver. 2). (ii) Social, for the Sufferer was the victim of social contempt (ver. 6), and cruelty: "they pierced," &c. (ver. 16), and He tells of the physical effect of all this (vers. 14, 17). 2. The supplications; in which note—(i) The character in which God is addressed—"holy" (ver. 3). The God of His "fathers" (ver. 4), and of His earliest life (ver. 9). (ii) The object for which He is addressed,—that God would come to Him (vers. 11, 19), and that God would deliver Him (ver. 20). (iii) The earnestness with which He is addressed (vers. 1, 2). II. THE RELIEF GIVEN. See this set forth in ver. 22 onwards. Its results were—1. The celebration of the Divine goodness (vers. 22, 24). 2. The conversion of the world to the true God (ver. 27). This shall be through (i) men remembering and turning unto the Lord. And (ii) because the kingdom is, &c. (ver. 28). And (iii) it shall be complete, including all nations, classes, and conditions. 3. The celebration of His religion to the end of time (vers. 30, 31). Not only is there a time to come when the whole generation shall be converted, but all the generations following shall celebrate His praise. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The withdrawal of God's sustaining presence from the Divine Son.*—So far, in this Psalm, we have had described to us the mental sufferings of Christ on the Cross; His physical sufferings and His final triumph are set forth in the portion of the Psalm yet to be explained. His mental sufferings were caused by the withdrawal of His Father's sustaining presence, and the reproaches of His enemies. The two united pressed His spirit with a weight of woe such as none besides have ever experienced. Sustained by His Father, as He had always hitherto been, He no doubt could have endured the reproaches of men without complaint; but when His Father withdraws His sustaining presence there bursts from His riven heart the agonised cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Why has the Father Almighty forsaken His only begotten Son? For our sakes. For no sin of His Son, but for our sins the Father forsook Him. It was as our surety and substitute that Messiah felt in His soul the wrath of God against sin. He had taken the sinner's place, to endure the wrath of God due to the sinner's sin; and the Father Almighty could not spare His Son and save the sinner. One or the other must die; and God so loved the world that He gave His Son. He forsook His Son that He might not forsake us. Again, the Father Almighty forsook His Son that the Son's victory over death and hell might be altogether His own victory—His own as man, sustained by simple faith in God. It was the Father's purpose to discomfit Satan by the very same nature over which he had triumphed in Eden. Accordingly a holy human nature sustained by faith in God, was the Saviour's only protection and defence in the final conflict. God the Father has left Him, God the Spirit has left Him, and He has also renounced all reliance on His own God-like power to aid Him, so that He stands before His enemies having, as His only weapon of defence, what Adam had in Eden, a holy human nature to be sustained by simple trust in God. A holy human nature, sustained by faith alone, was the weapon with which the first Adam should have conquered Satan; a holy human nature, sustained by faith alone, was the weapon with which the second Adam did conquer Satan. He used no other weapon to gain Him the victory on Calvary, than that which Adam had in Eden.

He withstood the onset made upon His holy will and nature, only because His faith in God was steadfast unto the end. And God left Him to Himself, to prove to Satan and the world that a pure heart, sustained by an unwavering faith, is a match, and more than a match, for every assault that can be made upon it. What a thought is this for the soul to rest upon. (*David Caldwell, A.M.*) *Christ forsaken of His Father*.—I. HOW ARE WE TO INTERPRET THESE AWFUL WORDS? 1. Not the cry of a mere martyr. 2. Not wrung from Him by agony of body, but by anguish of soul. II. WHY THIS CRY OF ANGUISH? 1. His disciples had forsaken Him, but it was not for that. God had forsaken Him. Christ was hanging there as our Surety and Substitute. 2. No other way of explaining this cry. This does explain it. Conflicting attributes in the Godhead to be harmonised before man could be accepted and forgiven. God found a way to reconcile them in the work and suffering of Christ. III. LEARN FROM THIS CRY—1. The true nature of Christ's death—a ransom, an atonement. 2. The evil of sin, and how God abhors it. 3. The greatness of God's love, and how we may obtain His mercy. (*W. Pakenham Walsh, D.D.*) *The saint forsaken—in what sense*.—Sometimes God takes away from a Christian His comforting presence, but never His sustaining presence. You know the difference between sunshine and daylight. We have often daylight but little sunlight. A Christian has God's daylight in his soul when he may not have sunlight; that is, he has enough to light him, but not enough to cheer and comfort him. Never was Jesus so forsaken as when He cried, My God, My God, &c., and yet was He never so strengthened by God's sustaining presence, for angels were at His service to minister to Him if He needed their ministry. (*J. Cumming.*) *Forsaken of God, but not finally*.—Did you ever read that Christ did finally forsake a man in whose heart and soul He still did leave His goods, furniture, and spiritual household stuff? A man sometimes goes from home, and sometimes he does not quite leave his home. There is much difference between these two. If a man leave his home and come no more, then he carries away all his goods; and when you see them carried away you say, "This man will come no more." But though a man ride a great journey, yet he may come again; and you say, "Surely he will come again." Why? Because still his goods, wife, and children are in his house; so, though Christ be long absent, yet if His household stuff abide in the heart—if there be the same desires after Him and delight in Him, you may say, "Surely He will come again." When did Christ ever forsake a man in whose heart He left this spiritual furniture? (*S. Bridge.*)

Ver. 2. O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.—*Why so many prayers are unanswered*.—Our prayers often fail of success—I. BECAUSE OF WANT OF FAITH. There are a multitude of prayers offered to God with something like this feeling: "Well, perhaps God will hear and answer; perhaps not. At any rate, I may as well pray; and if the answer comes, well: if not, I at least have done my duty." Now, such a feeling as this, though it be not positive infidelity, is so near to it as to be most offensive to God, and can only bring forth His severe displeasure. The matter of prayer is one thing, the manner of prayer is another. If the manner of presenting our prayer is right, and the matter wrong, then, of course, will it miscarry. If the matter is right and the manner wrong, the prayer is likewise fruitless of good. II. BECAUSE WE EVINCE A PRACTICAL UNBELIEF IN GOD'S ABILITY TO GRANT US OUR REQUESTS. We act as if probabilities affected God as they do us: we measure His ability by our own. We do not remember that "with God nothing is impossible." III. THE INDULGENCE OF SOME ONE OR MORE KNOWN SINS. Do we not read, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." To pray, and yet to commit wilful sin, or still to pursue a course of secret or open iniquity, is not only mocking God with lip service, but is also acting with hypocrisy, professing one thing but doing another. A praying spirit and a sinning heart cannot dwell together. IV. REMISSNESS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY. This tendency in the minds of many to divorce prayer from all the instrumentalities which God has connected with its being answered is one fruitful source of evil, and a cause why so many prayers are uttered in vain. To illustrate this: suppose that you are threatened with shipwreck—the storm rages fearfully, the vessel is dashed upon the rocks and is broken up, every hope of escape seems gone, and in the extremity of your distress you cry unto God to save you from this threatened death! But how do you expect He will save you?—by a miracle?—by bearing you through the air and landing you safely on the shore? Or do you not rather look for an answer to your prayer by means of human

agency, and by physical and natural instrumentality?—by a life-boat, by a cable fastened to the rock, by the buoying up of some part of the wreck until it is washed upon the beach. And suppose that, having prayed to God for succour, you yet refuse to use the instrumentality which, in answer to your prayer, He has furnished for your safety. You decline to get into the life-boat, or object to be drawn ashore by a rope, or will not commit yourself to some means provided for your escape: can you be saved? God answered your prayer, not by giving you instantaneously the end desired, but by giving you means adequate to secure that end; and if you refused the means you could not expect the end. So with spiritual blessings. God answers us through the instrumentality of duties; and we find the end we desire when we use the means He has enjoined. Another reason why our prayers are not answered is—V. BECAUSE WE DO NOT PERSEVERE IN PRAYER. One other way in which we ask and receive not, because we ask amiss, is—VI. BY ASKING THINGS WHICH DO NOT ACCORD WITH GOD'S PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE OR MERCY. We must not forget the great truth, that God uses this world as a school of discipline, to fit us for a holier state above. In this state trials, disappointments, &c., are the necessary instruments whereby our souls are purged and fitted for heaven. Yet we often pray that God would relieve us from this trial, that He would exempt us from this threatened affliction; but in His infinite wisdom He knows that to grant these requests would be productive of evil rather than good, as it is "in the furnace of affliction" that God often chooses His saints, and "through much tribulation that they enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Bishop Stevens.*) *Prayers which are not answered:*—They that have conduit-water come into their houses, if no water come they do not conclude the spring to be dry, but the pipes to be stopped or broken. If prayer speed not, we must be sure that the fault is not in God, but in ourselves; were we but ripe for mercy, He is ready to extend it to us, and even waits for the purpose. (*John Trapp.*)

Ver. 3. *But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.—A habitation of God:*—There is ordinarily something like a proportion maintained between the power of a monarch and the splendour of his palace. If you visit countries you will generally find that the mightier the king and the more extended his sway the more sumptuous are the royal residences. And the criterion is altogether a just one; for we have a full right to expect that the residence of the monarch will be a kind of index of his might; that in proportion to the largeness of his revenues and the extent of his dominion will be the magnificence of architecture and the richness of decoration which distinguish his mansion from those of his subjects. The house is, indeed, in most cases throughout society, the sign of the means of its inhabitant; it grows loftier than before, and is furnished in a more costly style as a man advances in the world and gathers to himself more of opulence and influence. There will be exceptions to every such rule; but these will ordinarily be in cases of meanness and penuriousness. But there is a King whose empire is allspace, and whose subjects all that breathe. What shall be a fitting palace for Him? How shall the rule we have laid down be proved applicable in the instance of our Maker? It must fail, because nothing, even of His own workmanship, can bear any proportion with Him. Solomon said, "The heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee." And when we go on to speak of churches, we are compelled to finish Solomon's sentence and say, "How much less this house which I have built." And yet as that temple, so churches may be properly styled—houses of God. He abides in them as He abides not in any other structure. And they ought to be beautiful. It is no good sign when palaces are more and more costly, and churches less and less noble. If God is to have a house at all, that house should be the noblest that we have the power of rearing; bearing such proportion as our ability can effectuate, to the greatness of the Being who is to show Himself within its walls. Otherwise, if our churches be inferior to our other structures, less splendid in design, less rich in architecture, we give the strongest of all possible proofs that we are less disposed to do honour to God than to ourselves; that we think the "curtains" good enough for the ark, and reserve the "cedar" for our own habitation. It was not thus with our ancestors, whom we are ready enough to accuse of superstition, but in whom there must have been better and loftier feelings. Witness the cathedrals which yet crest our land; mightier and more sumptuous, as they ought to be, than even our palaces. Tell me not that a mere dark superstition actuated the men who designed and executed these sublime edifices. The long-drawn aisles, the fretted roofs, the dim recesses, the soaring spires, all witness that the architect had grand



thoughts of God, and strove to embody them in combinations of the wood and the stone, even as the poet his conceptions in the melodies of verse, or the orator his in the majesty of eloquence. It is a cold and withered piety which catches no inspiration from the structure. And there must, we believe, have been lofty and ardent piety in those who could plan structures that thus seem to furnish instances of their piety to successive generations. The cathedral, with its awe-inspiring vastness, its storied windows, its mellowed light, its deepened shadows, appears to me like the rich volume of some old divine: I gather from the work the mind of the author, and it is a mind which has grown great in musing upon God. But we have another cathedral to throw open before you, another dwelling-place of Deity, not builded up of the stars which God originally wrought into His pavilion, nor yet of the marble and the cedar, which we ourselves may work into sumptuous edifices. Listen to our text. How is God therein addressed? "O Thou, that inhabitest the praises of Israel." It is the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks, and He it is who directs attention to the structure, declaring that it has not only been reared, but is actually inhabited by God. For though "Israel" be only the Church, and every member of that Church have been born in sin and "shapen in iniquity," I find no less a Being than the Redeemer Himself, and that too in His last moments, when trial was before Him in all its severity, addressing His Father as "Thou who inhabitest the praises of Israel." Now, is there any proportion here between the house and the inhabitant? Here is a cathedral built of human praises. Why should it be a cathedral in any sense worthy of God, or one within which God might be expected to dwell? You tell me that very rich and acceptable must be the thanksgiving of angels; burning and beautiful creatures, who spend existence in magnifying the Being by whom it was bestowed. Who doubts it? But they have only to thank God for creation. Their praise must be like that of Adam, whilst he was yet in innocence, and paradise in loveliness; whose morning and evening hymn spoke glowingly of a glorious Benefactor. And I can thank God for creation. The angel's song is mine, though mine belongs not to the angel. But I have to thank God for more than creation, for more than life. I have to thank Him for a second creation, for life out of death; and angels must yield to me here. If, then, sanctuaries are to be builded of praise, who shall be the architects of that in which Deity may be most expected to take up His abode? Behold the structures. Yonder is that which unfallen creatures are rearing; and very noble and brilliant is the fabric. How lofty those columns, which are formed out of anthems that commemorate the inaccessible majesties of Godhead! How solemn those dim recesses, where mention is made of the mysteries of the Divine nature! How rich that roof, which is wrought out of melodies which hymn the goodness of the universal Parent! But now turn to that which fallen creatures build. It is based on the "Rock of Ages"; the sure foundation-stone, which God Himself laid in Zion. And its walls, what are they but the celebration of attributes, which would have been comparatively hidden if not discovered in redemption? Its pillars, what but song upon song, each witnessing to perfections which could not show themselves in an unstained creation? Its aisles, what but prolonged choruses, telling out, till lost in the depths of eternity, the marvels of a work which even cherubim and seraphim had failed to imagine? And what its domes, its pinnacles, its spires, but soaring notes which bear aloft the stupendous truth, that He who is to everlasting could die, and that He who was from everlasting could be born; that God became man, and that man may now rise into fellowship with God! Ah! this is the cathedral. This could never have been built had not God come out from the secrecies of His magnificence, and thrown open depths in Himself which the most penetrating intelligence could never have explored. There is not a stone in this which may not be said to have been hewn by Himself out of the unfathomable mine of His perfections; there is not a niche which is not filled with a brighter image of Deity than the universe could have furnished had there never been transgression; there is not an altar on which burns not a more brilliant fire than could have been kindled had not the flame of God's wrath against sin been quenched in the blood of God's only begotten Son. And Christ, as He hung upon the Cross and contemplated the effects of the work which He was then bringing to a close, must have looked on wondrous structures, each of loftiest architecture and splendid ornament—the regenerated earth, the universe no longer defiled by one dark spot; but He knew that His work was to be pre-eminently illustrious, and the source of the highest glory of all to our Creator. Upon this, therefore, might He be expected to fasten; and though all orders of being were before Him, eager to build their Maker a house—angel and

archangel, from whose swelling choir started, as by enchantment, a thousand ethereal temples—who shall marvel that He selected us the feeble, us the sinful, and knowing that He was making us “heirs of God,” yea, “joint heirs with Himself,” left us to rear a sanctuary which should be more honoured than any other; addressing Himself thus with His dying breath to His Father—“O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel”? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

**Ver. 4. Our fathers trusted in Thee.**—*The God of our fathers.*—*A sermon to young men.*—The age in which we live is an enlightened age. And no man is bound to be religious for no better reason than that his father was religious before him. With advancing light and knowledge great changes are coming, or have already come. But how far do such things affect our attitude and utterance like those of the text? Offer first one or two regulative thoughts. 1. It is only right and fair to remember that the great facts of human nature and of human life with which religion has to do remain substantially the same throughout the ages. In the great matters of essential religion, in the main, no one age is more favoured than another. “Our fathers’” disease is our disease; and may not “our fathers’” cure be our cure? 2. Scepticism and unbelief are not new. It is ignorance of the history of unbelief that makes modern unbelief, to many minds, so formidable. Scepticism may change its form,—now the light raillery of a Voltaire, now the learning and logical acumen of a Hume, now the bitter wail of a Mill,—but it is one thing, one principle, one substance. Every age has its sceptic, or its sceptics. It looks almost as if Almighty God permitted them that, intellectually, the Church might be kept from going to sleep. 3. Science is doing grand things to-day. Her beneficent step is heard almost everywhere. But physical science is comparatively young. And you know the characteristic defects of youth. It is headstrong and impatient, and often irreverent. It is sometimes not over reticent, even on matters concerning which it cannot form reliable judgments. . . . I now speak on “the claims of the religion of our fathers.” 1. It was “our fathers’.” That the sires trusted in God is a very sufficient reason why the sons should hesitate, and hesitate long, before they reach the grave conclusion that there is no God, or that if there be He cannot be trusted because He cannot be known. One of the healthiest facts of human nature and of human life has ever been that spirit of reverence for the past which links generation to generation, and practically makes the race one. We Englishmen are by no means destitute of this fine sentiment. 2. Our fathers proved it. What is the testimony borne by honest men who have preceded us? It is that the religion of Jesus is a grand reality and not a human dream; that the Bible contains a Divine and all-satisfying revelation of God; that it is not a fabrication or an imposture; that the heart of man is weary till it find rest in Christ; that there is such rest in Christ; that in the Cross of the Crucified One there is hope for all, comfort for all, heaven for all! And how are we asked to receive that testimony? Some would have us believe that it is untrustworthy. Surely “our fathers” were not mere intellectual weaklings? What are we to say of the testimony they bore? We will go long before we speak ill, or listen with patience to ill spoken, of the bridge which bore them over! 3. They died in the faith of it. For me, I believe in the “God of my fathers.” I believe in the religion of my fathers. I will take the liberty of expressing it in forms suited to the spirit and the habits of thought of the age in which we live; but the essential Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ I keep. (*J. Thew.*) *God’s faithfulness to ancient saints good ground for trust and hope.*—Those who look upon this Psalm as having a primary reference to the King of Israel attribute great beauty to these words, from the very pleasing conjecture that David was, at the time of composing them, sojourning at Mahanaim, where Jacob, in his distress, wrestled with the angel and obtained such signal blessings. That, in a place so greatly hallowed by associations of the past, he should make his appeal to the God of his fathers, was alike the dictate of patriarchal feeling and religion. (*John Morison.*) *Strong warrant for trust.*—Our hope is not hung upon such untwisted thread as “I imagined so” or “it is likely,” but the cable, the strong hope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity; our salvation is fastened with God’s own hand and Christ’s own strength to the strong stake of God’s unchanging nature. (*S. Rutherford.*)

**Ver. 8. He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him.**—*Faith among mockers.*—David experienced “cruel mockings.” The flesh may not be cut, but the heart may be torn. But text tells of the Lord Jesus. David knew reproach but in

small measure compared with Him. It is the common heritage of the godly. But—

**I. THEIR TRUST IN GOD IS KNOWN.** Hence we learn—1. Our trust in God should be apparent, manifest, public. That in Christ which revealed it was His wonderful calmness. We ought distinctly to avow our trust. No man has a right to be a secret believer. 2. Our general conduct should reveal our faith. If I trust the Lord about my soul I must trust Him about my body, wife, children, and all my affairs. 3. This trust should come out most distinctly in times of trouble. For then it is our adversaries are most likely to notice it. In bereavements, business troubles. Let the possession of godliness tell its own tale, the spikenard its own fragrance. **II. THE WORLD DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THIS TRUST.** Our Lord's enemies restricted His trust to the point of His being delivered. But—1. Our faith is not confined to merely receiving from God. We must not live and wait upon God merely with a cupboard love. 2. Nor to what men call deliverance. Our Lord trusted still, though the cup did not pass from Him. The blind world cannot understand this. They say, like their father, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" And—3. Our faith is not tied to time. Christ's enemies thought that if the Lord did not deliver Him then, His trust would be proved a folly. But it is not so. We may not be delivered from our distresses to-night, nor to-morrow, nor next month; it may be for years. We do not tie God down to conditions, but we trust Him all the same. 4. Nor will it judge at all by present circumstances. How wrongly the world judged of Christ when it judged of Him by His sorrows. **III. THIS TRUE FAITH WILL, IN ALL PROBABILITY, BE MOCKED AT SOME TIME OR OTHER.** 1. Some men scoff at faith itself. It is an honour to have one's name written up on such an Arch of Triumph as that of Heb. xi. But many think it no honour at all. They hold faith to be a folly of weak minds. 2. Others, at the very idea of Divine interposition. "Look," they say, "he fancies that God will deliver him; as if the Creator had not something else to do besides looking after him, poor miserable that he is!" They believe in laws, they say, irreversible, immutable laws, that grind in like the great cogs of a machine which, when once they are set in motion, tear everything to pieces that comes in their way. 3. And some mock at all kinds of faith in the Divine love. How the world rages against electing love! The heathen could not make out a certain brave saint because he called himself Theophorus, or "God-bearer"; but he stuck to it that he was so, though they hated him all the more. 4. Some find amusement in the trials involved in the life of faith. Their cry, "Let Him deliver him," implies that their victim was in serious difficulty, but that was only sport to them. Such mocking is a part of the covenanted heritage. **IV. THE TIME SHALL COME WHEN OUR TRUST SHALL BE ABUNDANTLY JUSTIFIED.** 1. It is no small thing to have the ungodly bearing witness. "He trusted in God." It helps one to believe that he is really God's child. 2. Another justification will come when God shall deliver His people. That day will come. Dives sees Lazarus in Abraham's bosom: what a sight for him. At the last great day ungodly men will witness for the saints. They will have to own, "They did trust, for we mocked them for it." But whether men mock or praise, we trust in God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 9, 10. *Thou art He that took me out of the womb.*—*David's acknowledgment of God's goodness:*—1. He takes notice of common mercies. Such mercies as most men are partakers of. To come safe and sound into the world, and to be persuaded and sustained in it, they are such things as most men have allotted and vouchsafed unto them. But there are very few who are sensible of common mercies,—such is the corruption of our nature and our base ingratitude. 2. He acknowledges ancient mercies. He remembers those mercies which another would have forgotten. The mercies of his infancy and childhood and younger years. We should remember both temporal and spiritual mercies. 3. He remembers primitive or original mercies. Those mercies which he had at first, in the very entrance or beginning of his life when he first came into the world, and were likewise the ground and foundation of all the rest. It is with mercies as with judgments, one makes way for another, and the first is so much the more considerable as it induces and brings in the rest. 4. He takes notice of constant mercies. Those which were continued to him from the first moment of his being till now, through the whole course of his life to this present. He takes notice of the goodness of God to him in the full latitude and extent of it. See now the specification of the several particulars. (1) The blessings of the womb, in his birth and first coming into the world. (2) The blessings of the breast, in his nursery and first sustentation in the world. (3) The blessing of the cradle, in the tutelary care of his orphanage and desolate condition. (4) The



blessings of the covenant, in the continued and mutual interest which he had in God and God in him. (*T. Horton, D.D.*) **Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.**—*On the nature and influence of hope:*—To a contemplative mind nothing will suggest more powerful inducements, perhaps, for adoring the wisdom and the goodness of God than a distinct consideration of the many faculties, passions, and propensities with which a human creature is furnished. Exposed to various evils; encompassed with manifold infirmities; subject to pain and labour, to poverty, disease, and death, we might soon feel life a burden unless there were some pervading principle which seems to connect us with futurity, and bids us forget our past calamities and our present sorrows in the bright prospects that are to come. Hence by the goodness of God we are all possessed of that lasting and universal passion, Hope. Now let us consider—I. ITS NATURE AND INFLUENCE. It enters largely into every man's system of happiness, whether they be prosperous or afflicted. It is the spring of men's conduct, the end of their life. It keeps his soul alive within him, invigorates his faculties, purifies his passions, and directs the exertions both of his mind and body to their proper objects. II. BY WHAT PRINCIPLES TO REGULATE IT. A passion so general, and that has such an influence on the sum of life, cannot be too carefully regulated nor disciplined to its proper objects. In this, as in most other cases of moral and religious duty, the folly and the danger of extremes should be avoided. The happy medium, which we should all labour to attain on the present occasion, lies equally remote from silly and extravagant expectations,—from sluggish indifference and helpless despondency, or the dead calm of insensibility. The one is apt to lead to every kind of excess, and to end in misery and disappointment; the other disqualifies us for fulfilling the duties of life, and is, in fact, the destruction or subversion of every virtue. III. THE OBJECTS TO WHICH IT SHOULD BE DIRECTED. These are to be found in the blessed future world. (*J. Hewlett, B.D.*) *The meaning of hope as an instinct of the soul:*—The text is a strong figure intended to express the idea that hope is an inbred sentiment of the soul. The body, it is true, may exist without the eye, but in a very incomplete state. And there are emaciated souls, souls with deadened senses and broken faculties. But hope is yet an instinct keeping the face of the soul ever towards the future. Now, this instinct—I. IMPLIES THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR NATURE. For it is one of the chief blessings of humanity. 1. It is one of the most powerful impulses to action. 2. It is one of the chief elements of support under trial. Hope buoys us up beneath the load; gives us a steady anchorage amid the fiercest surgings of the storm. 3. It is a source of joy. The joys of memory and the pleasures of the passing hour are not to be compared with the joys of hope. II. SUGGESTS A FUTURE STATE OF EXISTENCE. It may not prove such existence, but it does much in that direction. For—1. Analogy supports it. All our senses and appetites have provision made for them—light for the eye, sounds for the ear, &c. And so in our social relations. 2. The Divine goodness leads to belief in it. III. MEANS THAT PROGRESS IN BLESSEDNESS IS THE LAW OF OUR BEING. Hope points not only to the future, but to good in the future. IV. SHOWS THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY TO HUMAN NATURE. For—1. It reveals eternal blessedness; and—2. Supplies means of its attainment which are both soul pacifying and purifying. V. INDICATES THE CONGRUITY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE WITH OUR NATURE. Therefore, if we quench this hope midnight reigns; and sin tends to do this. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. **Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.**—*Help in trouble:*—In this Psalm “a greater than David is here,” even Christ. You cannot pay a visit to Calvary, while reading this Psalm, without being struck with the record as giving a history of what subsequently took place in the sufferings and agony of our Lord. I. First of all, let us look at THE PRINCIPLE LAID DOWN—a trouble foreboded—“trouble is near.” Now, it is certain that Christians indulge to a sinful extent in the forebodings of trouble, and not unfrequently forebode troubles that never come to pass. We look at them in the distance as if they were mountains; yet when we approach them we find them to be mole-hills, which we can easily step over with a little exercise of faith. But our precious Lord foreboded nothing but what He knew was near and would come to pass, and therefore when He cried out, “Father, save Me from this hour,” He immediately adds, “For this cause came I to this hour”; as if He withdrew the petition and would not escape the sorrow. But mark the most prominent feature of His distress was distress of soul. When we look at the fact that Divine wrath lay heavily upon His soul we

wonder not that He cried out, "Now am I troubled." And so there is distress of soul of which His disciples are the subjects. 1. In their first awakenings. 2. In their after conflicts. 3. But it is never, to the believer, judicial punishment as it was with Jesus. It was Divine wrath that lay upon Him. 4. And there were external assaults. The powers of darkness were let loose. His Church must expect the like. The world and the Church cannot agree, unless the Church will compromise her dignity, her purity, her spirituality, and cringe to the world's carnal pursuits and carnal religion; then they may go on pretty well, hand in hand; but the curse of God will rest upon them both. A Christianity that brings you out from the world will be sure to bring upon you Satan's rage and fiery darts and the world's scorn. May you be able to make Moses' choice, and choose "rather to suffer affliction with," &c. Jesus told you it would be thus. "Marvel not if the world hate you." 5. And the Church has yet another trouble near. II. THE APPALLING FACT. "There is none to help." Now this, so far as Christ is concerned, is a peculiar mercy. For if any had been with Him they would have shared the honour. And for us, too, it is often well that there should be none to help, for if there were we would turn to them and not to God. III. THE CONCENTRATION OF OUR EXPECTATIONS. For when all help is gone elsewhere there comes the cry, "Be not Thou far from me." Oh! we live too low, we cleave to earth too much; but when we can soar, and mount as on eagles' wings, gaze on the sun, and enjoy the smiling countenance of our covenant God, our troubles then are mere mole-hills; if we look down on them at all we can hardly see them. (*Joseph Irons.*)

Vers. 14-18. They pierced my hands and my feet.—*Our Lord's passion*.—The great mystery of the passion of our Lord is one which in all its fulness the human mind cannot comprehend. In what manner His sufferings purchased our redemption, and what was the precise nature of those sufferings, are points which we shall in vain attempt to ascertain or demonstrate by words, however forcible; but that Christ died for our sins, and that we are redeemed by His precious blood, are amongst the many declarations of Scripture which place beyond all doubt the truth that the sufferings of Christ were an atonement for our sin. I. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST AS MAN. Every kind of pain tortured His body. The closing scenes of His life mark Him most conspicuously as "the Man of Sorrows." II. THE SUFFERINGS WHICH CHRIST ENDURED AS THE SON OF GOD. The sins of the whole world oppressed Him. Sin when duly felt is a heavy burden. How heavy, then, must have been the weight of the sins of the whole world! How wondrous is the outpouring of such love on the part of Jesus and of God! Let the memory of it guard us from attempting to extenuate sin, or in any way making light of it. And when we are called upon to suffer, let the example of our Lord's meekness and humility be that which we shall follow. (*T. R. Redwar, M.A.*) *The influence of a great sacrifice*.—It is strange to think that any man should think lightly of sin viewed in the light of Calvary Cross. It has a wonderful power and influence if you would view it aright. One day a little girl, sitting by her mother's side, gazed very intently at her parent's hand. A mere stranger would have said, "What a deformity!" as the hand was blurred and twisted. The girl asked her mother why the hand was different to the other. The mother told her that years ago when her little child was a baby the cot in which she lay caught fire, and her mother in her terror and anxiety tore off the curtains to stop the flames and wrap the child in. In doing so she so burned her hand that for months after she was unable to use it. You can think how the child's love multiplied beyond all words as she heard the story. Her future delight was to save that injured hand all the work she could possibly.

Ver. 20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.—*The dog*.—Dogs in the East are not much thought of, and never properly treated. The varieties with which we are familiar they knew nothing of. The dogs they had were but of one kind,—all hungry, half-starved, savage, cowardly, and more like wolves than dogs. But with us the dog is not only useful and beloved, but often displays the noblest qualities. For instance—I. COURAGE. God expects us to have courage (Deut. xxxi.). And the dog sets us a good example in this respect. Take this story of an incident which took place in the town of New Brunswick, New Jersey. A horse attached to a waggon, in one of the streets, became frightened, and started off in a run. The owner of the waggon was

thrown from his seat as the horse started, and was left lying on the street. The horse went galloping along, increasing his speed every moment, till he reached the corner of the next street. There a large Newfoundland dog made his appearance. He looked at the horse for a moment, and then sprang out into the street and rushed towards the horse's head. The dog made repeated efforts by springing up to grasp the bridle firmly with his teeth. But he failed each time and fell to the ground, narrowly escaping injury from the horse's feet. But the brave dog kept on trying, and at last, making an extraordinary spring into the air, he grasped the bridle firmly in his teeth and, pulling down the horse's head, put a stop to his running away. As soon as this was done the dog turned round quietly and walked away. But the people standing by, who had witnessed the dog's noble action, when they thought of the injury which might have been done by the runaway horse, felt disposed to praise very highly the conduct of the dog for the greatest act of courage they had ever seen a dumb animal perform. The next lesson we may learn from the dog is—II. INTELLIGENCE. God looks for intelligent understanding of His will in us all. See the opening verse of Prov. ii. And the dog sets us a good example of understanding and then obeying what we are told to do. A gentleman connected with the Newfoundland fishery had a dog of remarkable intelligence and fidelity. On one occasion a boat's crew in his employ were seen to be in circumstances of great danger. They were near a line of breakers outside of the harbour over which the waves were dashing and roaring in great fury. The danger of passing those breakers was so great that the men, brave as they were, did not dare to attempt it. A crowd of people stood watching them on the shore with great anxiety, but could do nothing to help them. Much time had passed, and the danger was increasing every moment. Among the people on the shore was the fishery master's great Newfoundland dog. He seemed to understand what the danger was. Presently he ran to the water, jumped in, and swam towards the boat. He soon made his way through the surf, and the men in the boat saw him coming near to them. At first they thought he wanted to get into the boat, but it soon became evident that that was not his purpose. He did not come near the boat, but kept swimming round it. While doing this he looked earnestly at the men, and would whine from time to time. The men wondered what he wanted. At last one of them cried out, "Give him a rope; that's what he wants!" The rope was thrown; the dog seized the end of it with his mouth, and then turned round and swam towards the shore. The men waiting there took hold of it, and began to pull it, and in a short time the boat with its crew was hauled through the dangerous surf, and the men on board of it were landed safely on the shore. And so the lives of that boat's crew were saved by the intelligence of that noble dog. III. AFFECTION. Love brought Jesus to die for us. "God so loved the world that," &c. And He desires love to be the ruling principle in our lives. Even dogs have shown this in remarkable ways. The captain of the artillery company of South Carolina was killed in a battle in Virginia during the American Civil War. His body was placed in a coffin, which was put into a strong box and carried to the home of his family in Columbia. It arrived there about a week after his death. On his arrival the captain's dog that he had reared and petted during his lifetime was at the gate, and, approaching the house, began to smell about him, with a good deal of excitement. When the coffin was taken from the hearse he ran under it and followed it to the house between the pall-bearers. Although a week had passed by since his master's death, and his body was closely fastened up in the coffin, yet by the sense of smell alone the dog had found out that it was his master's body which was in that coffin, and this stirred up all his affection for him. When the coffin was put on the table in the parlour the dog lay down under the table, and remained there till the funeral took place on the next day. Then after the funeral the dog took his place on the grave of his old master. They tried to coax him away, but in vain. He would stay there. He refused to eat or drink, but lay moaning there till the third day after the funeral, when he died on his master's grave. How real and genuine that dog's affection for his master was! IV. FIDELITY. This is a most important lesson. Whatever other good elements of character we may have, they will all be of little use to us without faithfulness. The want of it is like a hole in a purse, which lets all the money run out and be lost. Now, dogs have often been noted for fidelity. A French merchant was riding home on horseback one day. He had a large bag of gold with him, which was tied to the saddle in front of him, and was accompanied by a faithful dog. After a long ride he stopped to rest himself, and eat a lunch which he had with him. He alighted from the



horse and sat down under a shady tree, taking the bag of gold and laying it down by his side. On mounting his horse again he forgot to take his bag of gold with him. The dog saw the mistake his master had made, and tried to take the bag to him; but it was too heavy for him to drag along. Then he ran after his master, and tried by barking to remind him of his mistake. But the merchant did not understand what the dog meant. Then the dog went in front of his master and kept jumping up before the horse and barking loudly. The merchant called to him to be quiet and to stop that jumping. But the dog wouldn't stop. Then his master was alarmed. He began to think that the dog must be going mad. And as the dog went on barking and jumping with increasing violence, the merchant felt sure he was right. He said to himself, "He may bite me, or some one else. The only safe thing will be to kill him." Then he took a pistol from his pocket and, pointing it to the dog, fired at him. The poor dog fell weltering in his blood, and his master, unable to bear the sight, put spurs to his horse and went on. "I am very unfortunate," he said to himself; "I would rather have lost my bag of money than my good dog." Then he felt for his bag, but it was not there. In a moment he saw what it all meant. The dog had seen that he had left his bag of money behind him, and was trying the best he could to get him to go back for it when he shot him! How sorry he felt! Then he turned his horse, and rode back to the place where he had left his money. On reaching the spot he found the dog there. He had crawled back, all bleeding as he was, and had lain down beside his master's money to protect it. This brought the tears into the merchant's eyes. He knelt down by his dog, petted him, and spoke kindly to him. The dog looked lovingly into his face, licked his hand, and then turned over and died. The merchant had the body of the dog carried home and buried in his garden; and over its grave he had a stone slab set up, and with these words engraved on it: "In Memory of a Faithful Dog." Such are some of the lessons we may learn from the dog. (*Richard Newton, D.D.*)

*The power of the dog* (Sermon to Children):—The Bible does not generally speak well of dogs. The word dog in the Scriptures often means a wicked person. When he says, "Deliver my darling from the power of the dog," it is a prayer that God would deliver His only Son from the hands of wicked men. In Eastern countries dogs are reckoned as unclean animals, and there if you want to give a man a bad name you call him a dog. But there are good dogs and bad dogs; dogs to be trusted and dogs to be avoided. Let us think about the good dogs first. Most of you have read the beautiful story of the hound Gelert. And in Scott's beautiful story of the Talisman there is a story of Roswal, a noble deer hound who kept guard over the English standard. And there are the dogs of St. Bernard, who go out in the snow to rescue lost travellers. And there are the blind men's dogs. All these are good dogs. But there are bad ones. Here are the names of some of them. First, there is a dog called **SULKY**, a black dog. I remember when I was a little boy my mother used to tell me not to let the black dog get on my shoulder, that is, not to be sulky. When a child is bitten by that black dog his face becomes quite changed. All his beauty goes; and his character is altered too. He becomes stubborn, obstinate, won't work, won't play. His speech is altered too; he is rude, and the very tone of his voice is quite different. Beware of that black dog. Then there is another dog—a red one this—and he is called **PASSION**. Yes, a very fiery red dog, with gleaming, cruel eyes and foaming mouth. If he bites you he sends you mad for a time. The old Romans were quite right when they called anger a short madness. If you see a child with a very red face, kicking and stamping and screaming, you may be sure that the fierce dog **Passion** has bitten him. Julius Cæsar, when he was provoked, used to say over all the letters of the Roman alphabet before he gave an answer. Beware, then, of that fierce dog **Passion**. There is another dog of which you must beware. He is called **IDLE**. You never see him doing anything useful—carrying a basket or a bundle, as some dogs will. He lies in the sun sleeping, almost too lazy to get up and eat his food. Don't let him bite you. If he bites a child the boy or girl becomes heavy and slow. Instead of getting up in the morning fresh and bright, with plenty of time to say his prayers and start for school after breakfast, the child bitten by dog **Idle** gets up late, and so begins the day badly. The only thing he cares for is play, and very often he is too idle even for that. There is another dog called **MISCHIEF**, which is very dangerous. You must not think that I am speaking of Fun and Merriment,—they are good dogs, which skip and play about, and do good, not harm. But **Mischief** is sly and secret, he goes about in dark places, and is never safe to meddle with. When a child is bitten by dog **Mischief** no one can tell what harm he may do. **I**

know a poor man blind for life through a stone thrown by a mischievous boy. There is another dog of which you must beware. His name is CARELESS. He is not so bad as some dogs,—at times we can scarcely help liking him, and yet he does much harm. When a child is bitten by dog Careless things go badly with him. Perhaps, in school, the child is writing a copy, suddenly he lets a great drop of ink fall on his copybook, and there is a blot. And he is guilty of more things than these. Be on your guard against dog Careless. There are many other dogs of which I could warn you, but I will only speak of two. There is dog SELFISH,—one of the worst dogs of all. When we get a bite from him we are never happy ourselves, and we make others unhappy too. Then there is another dog called GREEDY, and he is a very near relation to dog Selfish. Children are often bitten by him, and they generally suffer; for greedy people by trying to get too much often lose all. There is a fable which tells us how dog Greedy was one day crossing a bridge over a river, and carrying a piece of meat in his mouth. As he looked into the river he saw his own shadow. Thinking it was another dog who carried a larger piece of meat than his own, dog Greedy flew at him with an angry bark, and as he opened his mouth the meat fell into the river and was lost. So it is often with greedy people, because they are not contented with what they have they lose it altogether. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Vers. 22, 23. In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.—*Jesus the example of holy praise*.—I. OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE. He renders twofold praise unto the eternal Father. 1. That of declaration. He did this in His teaching, by His acts, but most of all in His death. And He continued to declare God's name when He rose from the dead. Probably He does this still in heaven to the saints there. And certainly, by the spreading of His Gospel on earth. "In the midst of the congregation," &c. When His people here on earth offer praise and prayer He is united with them. In our praise He is the great singer, rather than we. And in the great day of redemption, when all shall be gathered in, it will be the same. Here also let us follow His example. II. THE LORD'S EXHORTATION (ver. 23). Praise Him, glorify, fear Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Public worship*:—To assemble at stated seasons for the public worship of their gods appears to have been the custom in all ages and nations of the world, and most especially of those who best understood the nature of such worship and the perfections of that Almighty Being to whom all worship ought to be addressed. But this duty is sadly neglected, so we consider its obligations—I. THE EXPLICIT COMMAND OF GOD HIMSELF. The institution of the Sabbath shows His will. II. THE ADVANTAGE WHICH WE EXPECT TO DERIVE FROM THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY. We do not come to church to hear what we did not know before. Few need to come for such reason. But discourses from the pulpit form no essential part of Divine worship. A sermon is not a prayer. It is an address of instruction to men, not an act of adoration to our God. It is when we enter the temple of the Most High, not so much to be delighted or instructed by the eloquence of the preacher, as to humble ourselves before our God in penitence or prayer. It is then that we shall experience the first advantage of public worship, and lay the foundation of all the rest. We shall gain help to make us a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within us. III. OUR LOVE OF GOD IS CONFIRMED AND INCREASED, AND OUR ZEAL FOR HIS HONOUR AND SERVICE. How sacred and helpful are the feelings which reverent worship of God in His temple produces. If such devotion be regularly continued till it become the settled temper of the mind it will not fail at length to produce a settled habit of pious and virtuous conduct; and pious and virtuous conduct is the greatest blessing which in his present state man can attain. IV. TO THIS LOVE OF GOD PUBLIC WORSHIP TENDS DIRECTLY TO ADD THE NEXT BEST VIRTUE OF THE HEART, THE LOVE OF MAN. In public worship we are surrounded by a number of our fellow-creatures, oppressed by the same wants, petitioning for the same favours, or giving thanks for the same blessings, labouring under the same infirmities, confessing the same offences, and depending upon the same Saviour for pardon. But all this not only exalts and animates our devotion to God, but excites and extends our humanity to our fellow-men. V. EVERY PORTION OF OUR WORSHIP SUGGESTS AND ENFORCES APPROPRIATE EXCELLENCE IN THE CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO ATTEND IT IN A RIGHT SPIRIT. VI. FOR THE SAKE OF EXAMPLE. The young, the ignorant, and the thoughtless are the most effectually instructed by the conduct of the devout, the aged, and the wise. The corrupt and depraved are the most effectually shamed by the piety and

virtue of the just and good. If, on the contrary, you frequently absent yourself from public worship, if you spend the Sabbath in idleness at home, your friends will be encouraged in the same criminal neglect. VII. THE INJURY TO OUR OWN PRINCIPLES AND MORALS WHICH FOLLOWS FROM THE NEGLECT OF IT. You will come in no long time to do without God in the world, without the hope of better things to come. VIII. PRAYER IS THE INDISPENSABLE CONDITION OF OBTAINING MANY OF THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN. But as in public worship we are greatly aided in prayer, here is another reason wherefore we should join public to private devotion. IX. THE REDEEMER HIMSELF WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH DAY: AND SHALL WE VENTURE TO BE ABSENT? Shall we presume to expect the favour of Providence if we think it not worth while to come to His temple and pray for it? X. THE DAY WILL COME WHEN, IF WE NEGLECT THIS DUTY NOW, WE SHALL REGRET IT MUCH. Youth and health and strength cannot always continue. Evil days must come. Age and sickness and sorrow must overtake us. And where, then, shall we seek the consolation which we shall certainly want? Happy will it be for us if we are enabled to seek it where only it can be found,—in the remembrance of a well-spent life, in that purity of heart which public and private devotion have produced. (*W. Barrow.*)

Ver. 26. **The meek shall eat and be satisfied.**—*Feasting on the sacrifice*:—The custom of sacrificial feasts was common to many lands. I. THE WORLD'S SACRIFICIAL FEAST. The Jewish ritual, and that of many other nations, provided for a ~~fatal~~ meal following on, and consisting of the material of the sacrifice. That which, in one aspect, is a peace offering reconciling to God, in another aspect is the nourishment and joy of the hearts that accept it. And so the work of Jesus Christ has two distinct phases of application, according as we think of it as being offered to God or appropriated by man. In the one case it is our peace; in the other it is our food and our life. The Christ that feeds the world is the Christ that died for the world. The peace offering for the world is the food of the world. We see hence the connection between these great spiritual ideas and the central act of Christian worship. The Lord's Supper simply says by act what the text says in words. The translation of the "eating" into spiritual reality is simply that we partake of the food of our spirits by the act of faith in Jesus Christ. Personal appropriation and making the world's food mine, by an individual act, is the condition on which alone I get any good from it. II. THE RICH FRUIT OF THIS FEAST. "Satisfied." Jesus Christ, in the facts of His death and resurrection, being to us all that our circumstances, relationships, and inward condition can require. III. THE GUESTS. It is the "meek" who eat. Meek usually refers to men's demeanour to one another. The expression here goes deeper. It means both "afflicted" and "lowly,"—the right use of affliction being to bow men, and they that bow themselves are those who are fit to come to Christ's feast. Men are shut out only because they shut themselves out. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The recompense of piety*:—In genuine religion there is great reward. Nothing is so conducive to the happiness of man, nothing so effectually secures it. I. THE TEMPER TO BE CHERISHED. Meekness, lowliness of mind, which so becomes us as sinners. II. THE CONDUCT TO BE PURSUED. We should seek the Lord. This supposes—1. That we have suffered loss. We do not seek what we have. We have lost the knowledge, favour, image, and the enjoyment of God. 2. That this loss may be regained. The Gospel shows us how. 3. The use of proper means is also implied. III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH SHALL BE SECURED. We shall eat and be satisfied; shall praise the Lord, and live for ever. (*T. Kidd.*) **They shall praise the Lord that seek Him.**—*Good news for seekers*:—These are the words of Jesus on the Cross. He died to further the Father's glory. This was the object He sought, and He solaces Himself with the thought of all the kindreds of the nations turning to God, and that they who seek the Lord shall praise Him. The assurance of text very encouraging. Note—I. THE PERSONS—the seekers of the Lord. These are they—1. Who really desire to commune with God. Not mere repeaters of a prayer, but those who really seek the Lord. 2. Who know that they are at a distance from Him. 3. But are anxious that that distance should be taken away. 4. And would feel themselves to be the friends of God. 5. And desire all this now. All this prepares the man to praise when he finds the Lord. II. THE PROMISE. "They shall," &c. 1. It is fulfilled unconsciously while the man is seeking. 2. The praise abounds when the desire is granted. You who seek, you shall surely find salvation, and that ere long. God may try you, let you wait a while before He gives you the joy of realised pardon; but seek on still. 3. You shall



go on seeking and go on praising. III. THE PRAISE. It will be—1. Because we found Him as we did. 2. That we found such a Saviour. 3. Because of our security. 4. Because we ever sought the Lord at all. Conclusion: Let us who have sought the Lord praise Him. Let us show our poor friends the seekers the way. We sought and we found; let us magnify the Lord at once. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Arduous seeking becomes joyous in finding*:—All his seeking, I say, helps him to prize Divine mercy when he receives it, and trains him to praise God according to the promise of our text, "They shall praise the Lord that seek Him." Never is a babe so dear to its mother as when it has just been restored from a sickness which threatened his life; never does a father rejoice over his little child so much as when he has been long lost in the woods, and after a weary search is at last brought home. No gold is so precious to a man as that which he has earned by hard labour and self-denial: the harder he has toiled to gain it, the more rejoiced is he when at length he has enough to permit him to rest. No freedom is so precious as the new found liberty of a slave, no enlargement so joyous as that of one who has long been sitting in the valley of the shadow of death bound in affliction and iron. No return to a country is so full of delight as that of sorrowful exiles who come back from cruel Babylon, by whose waters they sat and wept, yea, wept when they remembered Zion. (*Ibid.*) *Seekers become singers*:—As a bird lies hidden among the heather, but is seen when at last it is startled and made to take to the wing, so doth praise take to the wing and display itself when at last those who seek the Lord are permitted to find Him. What thunderclaps of praise come from poor sinners when they have just found their all in all in God in the person of Christ Jesus. Then their joy becomes almost too much for them to hold, vastly too much for them to express. Oh, the praises, the day and night praises, the continuous praises, which rise from the returning, repenting soul which has at last felt the Father's arms around its neck and the Father's warm kisses on its cheek, and is sitting down at the table where the happy household eat and drink and are merry. Praising time has come indeed when finding time has arrived. Happy day! Happy day! when we meet with God in Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Your heart shall live for ever*.—*The immortality of the affections*:—The heart has been employed by the inspired writers as the symbol of human affections. So the heart of man is said to be tried by God—to be opened, established, enlightened, strengthened, searched by God. The text asserts the absolute indestructibility of our religious affections. Work up to this through the intervening lessons. 1. There is one thing in this fleeting world which is immortal. Man wears on his forehead the crown of his regnant majesty; for his nature is undying. No soul has ever yet passed out of existence. 2. The text draws a distinction between life and mere existence. Into this word "live" we must suffer a new increment of meaning to enter. These hearts of ours may have one of two moral states. Whichever of these is possessed as a permanent character decides destiny. The heart that "seeks God" enters immediately into the nearness of God's presence, where there is fulness of joy. The heart that wilfully refuses to "seek God" is forced into the darkness of utter banishment from God for the unending future. The first of these conditions is "life," the second is "death." 3. The text evidences its authority by language peremptory and plain. The word "shall" is of itself sovereign and conclusive. But the form of speech employed is not that of prediction so much as that of promise. There are also three fixed laws of human nature which, fairly working together, render it absolutely certain that our affections will survive the shock of death, and reassert themselves hereafter. (1) One is the law of habit. The pressure of such a law holds more surely in our mental and moral nature than in our physical. Loves are stronger and hates are more inveterate than simple habits of body and mind. (2) Another law is that of exercise. "Practice makes perfect." Under this law the memory is often so wonderfully strengthened that it disdains data of aid. The most curious working of this law will appear in the fact that when our affections are wrought upon their increase is supreme. One's prejudices become his master. (3) Then there is the law of association. Most of all, this is subtle and forceful. When its action reaches a man's moral and mental natures working together it seems almost irresistible. These three laws actually intertwine themselves together, and accelerate the action of each other. 4. The text teaches that human immortality is quite independent of all accidents and surroundings. Augustine says, "Our life is so brief and insecure that I know not whether to call it a dying life or a living death." It is not in the body that our immortality resides. Your "heart" is yourself. There is one thing in man, only one, that is immortal—the soul. Human affections will live for ever in

the line of their "seeking." The heart therefore is independent of all surroundings. 5. The text fixes all its force by an immediate application of its doctrine to such as are meek enough to receive it. If your heart is to live for ever, then much consideration ought to be given to your aims in life, for they are fashioning the heart that is to be immortal. And our companionships ought to be chosen with a view to the far future which is coming. If our hearts are to live for ever, then some care should be had concerning our processes of education by which our affections are trained. And if our hearts are to live for ever, then surely it is now time some hearts were changed powerfully by the Spirit of Divine grace. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Immortality of the affections*:—Transient and occasional bursts of inspiration in the Old Testament anticipate what Christianity was afterwards to teach. They seem like lightning flashes, illuminating the deep obscurity for a moment. How much is implied in these words, "Your heart shall live for ever." They mean that the body shall not,—in its present elements it shall not; it has nothing to do with the life immortal. The happiness of the future existence shall not come from the body, from the gratification of its passions nor the exercise of its powers; and just so far as a man depends for his enjoyment on these earthly indulgences he is unfit for that spiritual state to which death will soon translate us, and for which it is our wisdom now to prepare. These words of the text also imply that the mind, though it shall endure, will not be the source of happiness in another existence. We know too little of its nature to say whether death will change it; but certainly it will change our estimation of it; for now, in this world, talent, force of mind, genius are set highest among the gifts of God. The affections (or the heart) are as much above the understanding as the mind is above the body. It is in the affections that the elements of heavenly happiness are to be found. These words teach us what should be our constant object, and lead us also to consider how abundantly God has provided for it on every side. Consider—1. How all the arrangements of this life favour the growth of those affections which are the elements of life immortal. The home, requiring of each within it to suppress those selfish passions which darken over everything which they touch, and making it manifest that all the sunshine and comfort of the dwelling depend, not on its magnificence, not on the luxuries within it, but simply and entirely on the spirit of love within. And the circle of friendship carries out those same affections into wider range. That these are Divine arrangements may be seen from the moral and spiritual laws which run through them—which ordain that these affections shall move in paths of duty. But these arrangements of life for a certain purpose are not meant to effect that purpose of themselves; it rests with us to trace out, to follow, and improve them. The first business of the Christian life is to deny ourselves, which means not to deny ourselves a blessing here and there, but to resist the strong selfish tendency of our nature, to train our affections in the right way, to regard them as the beginnings and indications of our future destiny, and to keep our heart with all diligence, since out of it are the fountains of immortal life. Once attach this thought of immortality to the affections, and how mighty and solemn those interests become! 2. All the arrangements of death, all of which have a purpose and meaning, are even more fitted to form for immortality the heart which is to live for ever. The world is changed by the presence of death; wherever it comes we feel that a new influence is there, a power is there which was not there before. Each one who feels at all feels that something is meant by it, that it is a communication addressed to him. Never do the affections come forth in purer or more disinterested action than in the presence of death. 3. The arrangements of the future existence are also of a kind to favour the growth of the affections. The foresight of the future state, the vision of it which lies before us in the light of the Gospel, must necessarily have a great effect on the efforts we make to reach it. Awake, then, to a sense of the importance of the heart. See how all your welfare for this world and the other depends on the right unfolding and care of its affections. (*W. B. O. Peabody, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord.—*The return to the Father*:—In this Psalm the utterance of the believing heart in trial and in deliverance becomes, at various points, a prophetic anticipation of the experience of Christ. In one verse after another we seem to hear out of His own mouth the sorrow and the triumph of Christ. Regarding the text in this light, as an expectation which a believer might naturally express in the hour of his own enlargement, it brings before us an interesting connection of thought. A believer who has been brought into great temptation and trouble, and whose faith has been

drawn out into lively and lowly exercise, when the deliverance comes will be aware of something more than the worth and the gladness of that particular deliverance. He has been holding converse with the mercy of God under pressure. There comes afresh into his heart the impression of the love of God, of which his own relief is only an instance and expression. So God teaches him—forces him to learn afresh—what a blessedness this is to have this God for his God for ever and ever. Then how naturally he may go on to such an anticipation as that in the text. He has a fresh sense of that in God which saves and blesses. How natural it becomes to cherish even so great an expectation as that the ends of the world may turn to the Lord! If all believers had the fresh sense they might have of Divine compassion there would be less uncertainty about the prosperity of the Gospel, less of feeble and dubious effort. And we may also hear the utterance of a Saviour's joy and exultation when it is said, "The ends of the world shall remember, and shall turn to the Lord." I. THE PROSPECT FROM THE CROSS. So taken, the text suggests to us our Lord's consciousness of the virtue that lay in His atoning sacrifice. The life of perfect holiness and perfect love was crowned by the death in which He put away sin. Exceeding glory to God and good to man were to be unfolded from it. This lay fully before our Lord's eye from the first. What He saw it becomes us to believe—the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord. II. THE SOUL'S AWAKENING. "They shall remember." It is as though something long forgotten had come to mind, had melted their hearts within them. In what sense is the truth in Christ new? It is not so new but that it has also something old in it. Just this lay behind many a transient conviction, many a vague and dim impression. Whatever of new has come has put unspeakable meaning into all the old. III. MAN'S PLACE WITH GOD. This is not so only with those for whom conversion comes after years of acquaintance with the Christian creed, and with the form of Godliness. It holds for men as men. The God who in Christ becomes ours is the very God for whom man was made. This is the meaning of man. And the blessedness which redemption brings is for the heart of man, as man was planned and made. IV. THE INEVITABLE RETURN. The text points to a time when turning to God shall be the main thing, the prevailing thing, as if a mighty tide setting that way, carried all before it. For the present we do not see this. (*Robert Rainy, D.D.*) *Three stages in religious life:—*I. REFLECTION. "Shall remember." We use the word reflection here because the usual Bible significance of the word "remember" is not simply "recollect," but meditate, consider. The act described is far more than one of memory; witness the words, "Remember now thy Creator." Here also the Psalmist means "remember the Lord." Thought is the first stage in true life. Right thought on a right subject is essential to right life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." 1. Think about God. 2. Think what God's ways with men are. 3. Think of your relationship to God. In the past; now; for the future. II. CONVERSION. "Turn unto" would be a synonym; or "return." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" These passages, with that in our text, remind us—1. That man is turned away from God. There is aversion and alienation. 2. Man may be restored to God. His face may yet look into the face of the Father, his life spent in Godward sympathies and activities. 3. This conversion, *i.e.* moral turning round, implies human effort and Divine help. Man is to turn, and God will turn him. Then, and then only, will his back be towards vanities and sins, and his face towards the true and the pure. More than passing sentiment is needed. There must be the putting forth of all the strongest forces of manhood, and the energising grace of God. III. ADORATION. "Shall worship." This is the climax. It is the fullest development of the higher life, the crown of human destiny. Adoration of God is—1. The instinct. 2. The obligation. 3. The satisfaction of souls. (*U. R. Thomas.*) *The importance of true religion, and the care of God to preserve it:—*I. TO GLORIFY AND ENJOY GOD ARE THE GREAT ENDS OF OUR CREATION AND REDEMPTION. This is the great and fundamental article of religion. God's design in the creation and government of the world must have been the manifestation of His perfection, and the conferring happiness on intelligent creatures in proportion to their capacities. To what purpose hath God distinguished man with a rational and immortal soul resembling Himself, but to make him capable of religion and eternal life. What the character of God and the nature of man so clearly demonstrate on principles of reason, God hath expressly declared to us in His Word. II. GOD HAS GIVEN MEN PROPER INFORMATION OF HIS CHARACTER, WILL, AND GRACE AS THEIR RULE OF DUTY AND THEIR GUIDE TO HAPPINESS. The existence of the creation demonstrates the existence of the Creator; its greatness proves His immensity; its order, His



wisdom; and the provision made for the happiness of His creatures, His boundless goodness. In every state of man the only perfect rule of religion is Divine revelation, which confirms all the principles of natural religion, and informs us of many things necessary to be known which our own reason could not have discovered. The dispensations of God's providence subserve the design of His revelations for preserving religion and virtue in the world. III. THAT BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST THE WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD SHOULD BE GENERALLY FORGOTTEN AND NEGLECTED BY MANKIND. This melancholy truth the history of the world hath but too amply verified. True religion must always have the true God for its object, and His moral character and revealed will for its rule. False religion originates in a departure from the worship of the true God to that of idols; either as objects of religious adoration or as the means of it. To this cause Moses ascribed the idolatry of Israel. The sun, moon, &c., from being worshipped only as representations of God, came to be considered and worshipped as so many distinct deities. As the multitude of gods worshipped by the heathen distracted their religion, and turned it away from the only true God, so their mean and immoral characters shamefully debased it. Religion is the chief part and foundation of moral righteousness. As before the coming of Christ the Gentiles had grossly departed from the knowledge and profession of the true religion, so the Jews had greatly degenerated from the sincere belief and practice of it. IV. BY THE GOSPEL AND THE GRACE OF CHRIST ALL NATIONS SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO REMEMBER AND TURN UNTO THE LORD. The coming of the Saviour was the era of light, reformation, and happiness to the world. . . . As to the proper improvement of these truths, let us ever live under the serious belief and impression that, to glorify and enjoy God, our Creator and Saviour, are the great ends of our existence, and can be attained only by the knowledge and practice of true religion. (*W. Dalgleish, D.D.*) *Nature and extent of true conversion under Messiah's reign.*—I. THE NATURE OF TRUE CONVERSION. 1. It is to remember. It is fitly expressed by the case of the prodigal, who is said to have "come to himself." The Holy Spirit is ever seeking to make us remember. Sometimes by adverse providences, as with Joseph's brethren. At other times by His Word. Sometimes it is without any apparent cause. "I thought on my ways," says David, "and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." And there will, however brought, be many ways which we shall remember with sorrow and shame. As our ways of open immorality: things which we thought were no harm, since other people did them; and ways which we have thought nothing about—sins of the heart. And ways, too, that you have counted good you will thus remember. All your religion while unconverted will appear odious to you. 2. It is turning unto the Lord. This is very important, for it is possible to remember our evil ways without turning from them. And it is possible both to remember and turn, and yet not to turn to the Lord. And—3. There will be "worship"—the homage of the heart presented to God according to His will. II. THE EXTENT. "All the ends of the world"; "all the kindreds of the nations," &c. It was fit that the accessions of the Gentiles should be reserved for the Gospel day, that it might grace the triumph of Christ over His enemies. And the good work then begun must go on, no longer limited to the seed of Abraham. But the time will come when our text will be abundantly fulfilled. Nor can the time of fulfilment be far distant. The last branch of the last of the four beasts foretold by Daniel is now in its dying agonies. But while we are concerned for all the world, let us not forget our own souls. (*Andrew Fuller.*) *The assistance derived by Christianity from human learning.*—It is matter of doubt whether there is real improvement in the world in morals and religion. In some parts matters seem to have become worse. But in others, our own country especially, since the Reformation there has been improvement, and such as is not likely to be lost. Still, we are far enough from perfection. For that we must look on to the kingdom of God yet to be established, but meanwhile we must help it forward as we best can. But note—I. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF THE IMPROVEMENT WE HAVE NOTICED? They are—1. General experience, though there are instances in which the moral and religious condition of the people are no better now than they were ages ago. The reason of this is that these communities have possessed no literature, and hence the teachings of experience have been lost and each generation has to begin anew. 2. Letters and learning. Hence these teachings no longer die with those who have acquired them, but are handed on to their successors. But we have instances in which—as in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, where there have been letters and learning, but because separated from true religion—the world has not been morally advanced by them. The experience of France in the eighteenth century is in

point here. 3. The revelation of Christianity. But this from an early period down to the time of the Reformation being loaded with superstition, the moral life of men was but little benefited. Hence we gather that there must be the union of Learning and Christianity if any real progress is to be made. II. WHAT ASSISTANCE CHRISTIANITY HAS RECEIVED FROM HUMAN LEARNING. This learning may be distinguished—1. As the study of ancient languages and composition. Hence now we have the Scriptures translated, and this learning is useful not only to translate but to teach us the rules of interpretation, and of just criticism, and of the best models of composition, and to give freedom and strength to the imagination. Even the elegance of ancient writers, though often considered as merely ornamental, is not without its use towards the perfection of Christian morals. There is a connection and a sympathy which, though they do not always appear, have yet a tendency to prevail, between whatever is simple and elegant in the arts, and a simplicity and elegance of manners. By this connection we are rendered more sensible of any thing that can soften the human mind, can heighten the enjoyment of social life, or prepare us for that Christian charity which is the bond of peace and of all virtue. 2. The study of philosophy, which is not merely useful in the discovery of curious and useful arts. It serves a much nobler and more generous purpose, that of promoting our progress towards the perfection of our nature, and of advancing the interests of true religion. (*W. Pearce, D.D.*) *The triumph of Christianity*:—Some regard this Psalm as our Lord's soliloquy when expiring on the Cross. It may be so. Fitter words could not have been conceived. The mighty hero sees the conflict ended, anticipates the victory, and begins to chant the conqueror's pæan. I. THE CONVERSION OF THE NATIONS TO GOD MAY BE EXPECTED. It is much to be desired. But the battle is long and weary and the end is not yet. Some think it is not to be looked for. But—1. Our newborn nature craves for it; and—2. Is it not unlikely that on this earth where God has stood in the person of His Son, that evil, after all, should vanquish Him? 3. And see the promises of reward made to our Redeemer. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." And the Scriptures are full of such promises, in the Psalms and in all the prophets. It is good to be reminded of them, for we shall not labour well if we do not labour in hope. And as yet we have not done so much as to give the fragments of the Gospel feast to the nations. When the Church is ready for great events they shall occur to her. II. SUCH CONVERSION WILL OCCUR IN THE USUAL MANNER OF OTHER CONVERSIONS. "The nations," says our text, "shall remember, and shall turn unto the Lord, and shall worship before Him." 1. They shall remember. In this manner conversion begins. 2. They shall turn. 3. They shall worship. III. THE MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS RESULT ARE TO BE FOUND AT CALVARY. This is a Calvary Psalm; its connection is full of sacrificial suffering. Every conversion is the result of Christ's death. And His death is our motive for spreading the Gospel. And it is the security of future triumph. We shall conquer the world, but it will be by the Cross. The old legend of Constantine, "*In hoc signo vinces*," hath truth in it for us. By this we shall conquer—by the Cross, by the preaching of Jesus Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 28. The kingdom is the Lord's.—*An universal religion*:—The law of Moses was confined, by the terms of its promulgation, to the land of Judæa: and other systems which have been embraced as Divine attempted to ensure their success in some quarters of the globe by an accommodation to local manners which prevented them from spreading to distant regions. But the religion of Christ has all the internal characters of an universal religion. The manner in which the Gospel was introduced corresponds to these characters of an universal religion. Before He ascended to heaven the Founder constituted His apostles witnesses to Him unto the uttermost parts of the earth, and sent them forth to make disciples of all nations. . . . We readily recognise in Jesus that illustrious descendant promised to Abraham, "in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed"; that Prince of Peace whose universal dominion the prophets have painted by various imagery, "in whose reign the righteous were to flourish, and the knowledge of the Lord was to cover the earth." But when we look beyond the destruction of Jerusalem these bright views seem to vanish, and we mark, with wonder and regret, a striking inconsistency between the earlier and later history of the Christian Church. This religion was, for many ages, persecuted and despised by the powers of the earth. For a long time it was involved in the superstition and barbarism of the dark ages. The fact is, that, after seventeen hundred years have passed, the religion of

Jesus is established in less than a fifth part of the globe. The faith of Mahomet, which has been permitted to overspread a larger portion of the earth, retains undisputed possession of its conquests. What can be said as an answer to the presumption, drawn from present appearances, against the fulfilment of the promise of universality for Christianity? 1. Though the Almighty may do all His pleasure by the word of His mouth, He generally chooses to employ means in accomplishing His purposes, and the operation of those means is so gradual as to admit of a progress in which one thing not only paves the way for another, but gives notice of its approach. We are not warranted, by the analogy of any part of Divine providence, to expect, in the communication of religious instruction, that haste which to our imaginations may appear desirable. 2. As in natural productions there is a time of maturity to which all the preparation has tended, so the season destined for the appearance of the Gospel, which is called in Scripture "the fulness of the time," was produced by a preparation of four thousand years. 3. The partial propagation of Christianity has already diffused a large measure of religious knowledge, which concurs with other circumstances in preparing the world for its being universally received. 4. The partiality, the delay, and the imperfection in the propagation of Christianity are fully accounted for by the nature of those human means which, without a succession of miracles, it was necessary to employ. . . . Presumption against the universal propagation of Christianity, which has been drawn from present appearances, is contradicted by the general analogy of the Divine government, by the effects already produced, and the forward tendency of things. (*G. Hill, D.D.*) *The oldest kingdom and the best government*:—What can be a more consoling fact, in times of national convulsion, than the one declared here? The Lord's kingdom is distinct from all others. I. THE GREATEST KINGDOM EVER KNOWN. My text says the Lord is the governor. I much question if He has a kingdom for His own upon the face of the whole earth now. There was a time when He appeared signally to recognise our own dear old England distinctly above all other nations; but now it has gone down, in some instances, to downright infidelity, or, in others, perverted to gross idolatry. Whatever He may please to do with the land of my nativity, I shall rejoice to know we have in it yet more of His own kingdom than any other nation upon earth. Of the Lord's kingdom we note—(1) It is a chosen one: men enter it through a broken and contrite spirit; others who have not known this are not in the kingdom. (2) Hence it is His by conquest over human hearts. He has subdued them unto Himself. (3) It is under His own special care. And (4) He peopled it with the precious souls that He had ordained from everlasting. (5) And He dwells and abides there. (6) Its constitution is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." It is a sacred kingdom and no unclean thing shall enter it. (7) How vast are its treasures—grace and glory. II. IT HAS THE WISEST, HOLIEST, AND BEST OF GOVERNORS. (1) His sovereignty is absolute over all nations for His own people as well as in them. (2) It is exercised in the hearts of His subjects. Who ever heard of any other governor who reigned in the heart of every one of his subjects? (3) He never revokes any of His decrees. "My covenant will I not alter." His statutes stand for ever, those in His secret statute book and those in the Scripture, the inspired abstract of His will. (*Joseph Irons.*) *On providence*:—I. PROVE THE DOCTRINE. That God presides in every department of nature, and exercises a superintending care over the works of His hand, has been believed in every nation and in every age. The cavils of sceptical men are not to be considered as detracting from its universality. What is providence but the exercise of the Divine attributes? Sound philosophy never supported the atheistical system which would exclude the Almighty from His kingdom, and surrender to blind chance the government of the universe. The Divine government is recognised in the material system, but it is not confined to that. In the moral as in the natural world His pervading energy appears. What are the annals of nations but a continued detail of its operation? The world is a great scene, where from age to age a series of providential interpositions has been displayed. Some invisible power is employed in over-ruling human affairs. An infinite mind must have access, though we cannot perceive it, in many different ways, to the human heart. But man is conscious all the while that no violence is offered to his will, that he is acting as a moral agent, without any infringement of his freedom. II. RECOMMEND A BECOMING TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE. His perfections demand our veneration and justify our confidence. Infinite goodness, added to Almighty power, constitutes the very character which claims our dependence. (*T. Lawrie, D.D.*)



Ver. 29. **None can keep alive his own soul.**—*Life's need and maintenance*:—Begin by noting the connection; then take text in a spiritual meaning. I. **THE INNER LIFE MUST BE SUSTAINED BY GOD.** None of us can make his own soul live, nor can we keep it alive. Old Christians cannot, more than young ones. At no time or place, however sacred, can we do this. The analogies of nature, which show that repeated, continued help must be given, tell us of our constant need of fresh grace. Experience asserts the same. In each separate act of the Divine life we need help. Our own blunderings and failings when we have not sought renewed help teach the same lesson. The number and strength of our adversaries teach it. If we could, why is such full provision made in the Gospel? II. **THIS TRUTH BRINGS GLORY TO CHRIST.** III. **SUGGESTS THE PATH OF WISDOM FOR OURSELVES.** We are to remember that we want not only grace to begin with, but grace to abide in Christ. Diligently use all means of grace. Keep clear of all that which tends to destroy life. A sane man does not willingly take poison. Look to Christ day by day for everything. Do not become self-satisfied. Never say, "Soul, take thine ease,"—to say that is to be a fool, as was the rich man who first said it. Day by day go to Christ. IV. **THIS SUBJECT INDICATES A WAY OF USEFULNESS** for all God's children. It is a grand thing to be blessed of God, to turn sinners from the error of their ways; but there is equally good work to be done by helping struggling saints. The old Roman said he thought it as much an honour to preserve a Roman citizen as to slay an enemy of his country. Let us watch over one another; be pastors to one another. Help one another. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spiritual life not self-preserved*:—Go, young man, even you who are a zealous Christian, go without your morning prayer into the house of business, and see what will befall you. Venture, my sister, down into your little family without having called upon God for guidance, and see what you will do. Go with a strong resolve that you will never be guilty of the weakness which dishonoured you a few days ago, and depend upon the strength of your own will and the firmness of your own purpose, and see if you do not ere long discover to your shame how great your weakness is. Nay, try none of these experiments, but listen to the Word which tells you "none can keep alive his own soul." (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 30. **A seed shall serve Him.**—*Good men as seeds*:—This figurative expression signifies Christ and His people, who yield true obedience to God,—they are called by this name in a spiritual and figurative, but most appropriate sense. The idea is taken from the operations of the husbandman, who carefully reserves every year a portion of his grain for seed. Though it be small, compared with all the produce of his harvest, yet he prizes it very highly and estimates it by the value of that crop which it may yield in the succeeding autumn. Nor does he look only to the quantity; he pays particular regard to the quality of the seed. He reserves only the best, nay, he will put away his own if spoiled, that he may procure better. The very smallest quantity of really good seed is, to him, an object of great desire, and if by grievous failure of crops he should not be able to procure more than a single grain, yet would he accept it thankfully, preserve it carefully, and plant it in the most favourable soil. Such is the source from which the metaphor is taken. (*John Stevenson.*)

Ver. 31. **They shall come, and declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.**—*The dying thoughts of Christ*:—1. Jesus complains that God had deserted Him. Bearing our sins caused this intolerable suffering. Yet even whilst thus suffering He adores the uprightness of God. 2. Jesus turns His thoughts back to the past history of the people of God. 3. The Father at length heard His earnest, importunate entreaties. 4. That which was in our Saviour's mind illustrates St. Paul's meaning when he tells of our Lord, that "for the joy set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame." (*Alex. Irwin, M.A.*)

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### PSALM XXIII.

**VER. 1-6. The Lord is my Shepherd.**—*Exegesis of the Psalm*:—This Psalm, so personal and tender in its tone, may be called a lyric; and its reference to shepherd

life makes it a pastoral; and being such, it becomes by its brevity and finish an idyll—an idyll excelling in naturalness and truth any that Theocritus, the father of idylls, ever wrote. But in its simplicity it sets forth the weightiest theme. Feeble man may have constant companionship with the mighty and everlasting God, may cast all his anxiety upon Him, for He careth for each one of us. The Psalmist was not unacquainted with the shepherd's office; for he had fed his father's sheep in the mountains about Bethlehem, and often in solitude shut up to their lowly and loving companionship, by sympathising in their wants, he had loved them much, and for their sake had struggled hard with lion and bear. Ver. 1. The Lord—Jehovah; from derivation, the "Everlasting One"—the "One that is." Ver. 2. Lie down—Applies to animals that lie upon the breast with the limbs gathered under them. Pastures—The place where one settles down. It can stand for the dwellings of men, for dens of wild beasts, for encampment of flocks. Green—Implying grass in its early growth. Still waters—or waters of rest. Ver. 3. Soul—or spirit; used of animals as well as men. They and we lose spirit by exhaustion. We lose spirituality by sin. Paths of righteousness—Not only a right course, but one which ends in righteousness or safety. Ver. 4. Valley—Not death, but a deep ravine overhung with rocks or trees, and full of gloom, even at midday. Rod and staff—In the Himalayas the shepherd has been seen using his crook to draw a straying sheep from the brink of a precipice. Ver. 5. Preparest—We set a table, putting all upon it in fit order. Runneth over—Literally, my cup (is) abundance. Original of abundance is used of draught that satisfies for quantity. Ver. 6. Follow—Its original is often used of the eager pursuit of enemies and persecutors. (T. H. Rich, D.D.) *The Psalm of faith*.—This has sometimes been called the Psalm of faith, and certainly with great reason. It breathes in every line the air of serene and happy confidence undisturbed by a single doubt. Nowhere else is the absence of misgiving or anxiety so remarkable. Yet equally noteworthy is the connection of this state of safety, rest, and peace with the statement made in the opening words; for the fact that Jehovah condescended to be the writer's shepherd was the underlying basis of the whole experience. The representation of God as a shepherd is found first in Jacob's blessing of Joseph (Gen. xlviii. 15), "the God which fed me,"—literally, who was my shepherd. It was afterwards often used in reference to Israel as a people, and in the New Testament is applied to our Lord both by Himself and by His disciples. The whole tone of the lyric is personal, and this it is that makes it so precious. Jehovah cares for the flock just because He cares for each member of it. The believer is never lost in a crowd. "I shall not want." The expression is absolute and unlimited. Neither food, nor protection, nor guidance, nor loving care and sympathy shall be lacking. The believer is sure not only of repose, restoration, and guidance, but also of protection and deliverance even in the most trying circumstances. . . . The last verse of the Psalm summarises what went before, with the additional thought of its continuance. "Only goodness and loving-kindness" means that the favour bestowed on the believer is unmixed, or that the exceptions are so few as to be unworthy of consideration. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. (Talbot W. Chambers, D.D.) *A Psalm of personal trust in God*.—The world could spare many a large book better than this sunny little Psalm. It has dried many tears, and supplied the mould into which many hearts have poured their peaceful faith. To suppose that the speaker is the personified nation chills the whole. The tone is too intense not to be the outcome of personal experience, however admissible the application to the nation may be as secondary. No doubt Jehovah is the Shepherd of Israel in several Asaphite Psalms and in Jeremiah; but notwithstanding great authorities, I cannot persuade myself that the voice which comes so straight to the heart did not come from the heart of a brother, speaking across the centuries his own personal emotions, which are universal because they are individual. It is the pure utterance of personal trust in Jehovah, darkened by no fears or complaints, and so perfectly at rest that it has nothing more to ask. For the time desire is stilled in satisfaction. One tone, and that the most blessed that can be heard in a life, is heard through the whole. It is the Psalm of quiet trust, undisturbed even by its joy, which is quiet too. The fire glows, but does not flame or crackle. The one thought is expanded in two kindred images, that of the shepherd and that of the host. The same ideas are substantially repeated under both forms. The lovely series of vivid pictures, each but a clause long, but clear-cut in that small compass like the fine work incised on a gem, combines, with the depth and simplicity of the religious emotion expressed, to lay this sweet Psalm on all hearts. (A. McLaren, D.D.) *Serenity of soul*.—Is

there anything in the religious life outside of Christianity that shows such trust in God as this Psalm? There are psalms of the pantheistic religions in which the soul seems to lose itself in the great current of the Divine Being, and become but one drop in the ocean of universal existence. They have the idea of rest and repose and freedom from disturbance and trouble. But in this Psalm there is something different. There is indeed the individual consciousness of love resting on the soul, that still has its own right to live and to know its past. Every religion bears its testimony to us of God dwelling in human nature. I do not know of a religious yearning of mankind in any part of his spiritual history which has not sought to see beyond the clouds the peace of God resting on the human soul. That is the great mission of religion in the human soul. There are times in our experience when we are inclined to overstate the necessity for turmoil in the soul. The soul at times needs to be disturbed and broken-hearted; but always in anticipation and preparation for the calm that lies beyond. The ultimate condition of the human soul is repose, such as fills the sweet rich verses of this Psalm of David. It is a man who has been through great experiences who thus lifts up his voice and sings to God in absolute trust in the Divine goodness and strength. This Psalm is an outpouring of the soul to God, never matched in all the riches of the Christian day. It is the utterance of a soul absolutely unshaken and perfectly serene. In the New Testament many of the expressions of deepest faith have their origin in this Psalm. Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd," . . . "I shall not want." There are two ways of not lacking a thing in this world. He lacks nothing who has everything. The better way is for a man to look up, and bring his desires down to that which God sees fit to give him. This applies emphatically to things of faith. . . . There are two ways by which we come to "green pastures and still waters." God had led David into sweet and beautiful circumstances, where it was easy for him to walk. But a place is not simply a thing of the outward life. It is a thing of the inward life. To go with calm soul, because it calmly trusts in God in the midst of tempests and tumults, and say, "I am at peace and rest,"—that is the triumph of the Christian state. First of all comes a peaceful condition within the soul, and by and by comes the kingdom of heaven with all its scenery. . . . "For His name's sake." The poor soul loves to think that God is taking care of him for his own sake, because it is precious to Himself. Many a time the soul has to flee from the sense of its own little value to the thought that God values it because it is dear and precious to Him. . . . "In the presence of mine enemies." This does not mean separation from our enemies, nor driving them away. God gives us peaceful moments in the midst of the distress and struggle of our lives. . . . Let your souls rest in peace on God. Only, be sure it is really He on whom you rest. He is continually caring for your souls, and will not let you rest in absolute torpor. You cannot rest too peacefully, too tenderly on the love of God, if only it is really God's love. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *Religious conceptions coloured by secular vocation* :—This Psalm does not provoke our thinking: it touches us away down below our philosophy and our theology; comes to us rather like a covert from the heat, a refuge from weariness, a shelter from the rain, and folds as unthinkingly into the creases of our souls as water adapts itself to the thirsty. The longings of the human spirit have their own beatitude, and better than any other interpreters make clear the meaning of the Holy Word. Round this oasis of truth, this 23rd Psalm, tired, hungry, erring, and anxious men and women have gathered, and found green pasture, still waters, recovery from their wanderings, and gentle light to guide them through the valley of the death-shadow. This Psalm brings us not only near to God and our own souls, but also near to one another. It is a great, roomy catholic Psalm. The things which the Gospel has to supply are the great, deep, common wants of all human souls. We can all stand up in front of this Psalm, and feel ourselves so far perfectly "brothered" in each other. David must have written this Psalm when he was a good deal more than a youth. It is not dated, yet its quality is its own date, as the wine-taster finds the age of the wine in the flavour of the wine. Time is a factor in the arithmetic of all life and growth. Experience and discernment ripen much in the same way as corn and wheat ripen. Ripeness is not to be extemporised, nor is it transferable. Time is one factor, suffering is another. The two together and the product sanctified is Christian maturity. This writer had learned the lesson of weariness; he had passed under the discipline of sin. He had learned to know himself by sinning, and learned to know God by enjoying the Divine deliverance and recovery from sin. He had tested God, and found Him faithful, and tested Him so many times that he knew He would always be faithful.



The imagery of the Psalm suggests to us as a passing lesson that every man paints religious truth in the colours furnished by his own character of life and mode of occupation. Objects and relations that are familiar to us furnish us with a vocabulary whose terms even the Holy Ghost Himself will have to use if He is going to make to us any revelation. A shepherd, familiar only with pastoral relations, can apprehend the bearing of God toward us only under the figure of a shepherd. He thinks in that way. The one impression that flows from off this entire Psalm is that of a man who has come now where he is able and glad simply to trust and let himself be taken care of; and that, too, is a long and very slow lesson. Faith is distilled from unquiet experience. We have to learn to trust.

(*Charles H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Sufficiency in God*:—I. THE GREAT NAME—Jehovah. In Egypt thousands of gods, but no Jehovah. II. A GREAT FAITH—"My Shepherd." III. A GREAT SUFFICIENCY—"I shall not want." The insatiable character of man. Life a hunger and thirst, intellectual, social, emotional. David's contentment arose from finding sufficiency was in God. The Lord was more to him than the manna, or the stream in the wilderness. He is sufficing beyond all thought, feeling, hope. To whom is He thus? To the weary, troubled, perplexed, and penitent. (*G. S. Reaney.*) *The shepherd God*:—But let us notice the result in us. 1. First, there is the banishment of want. David says, "I shall not want." 2. The Good Shepherd banishes fear. David says, "I will fear no evil." Perhaps there is no blessing so great for the happiness of the soul as the driving away of fear, which God does for those who give their hearts to Him. He rescues us from the fear of punishment. He takes away the fear of the judgment. The man who has received a pardon from the President of the United States has no longer any fear of punishment for his crime. What a blessed relief that is! God takes from us also the fear of death. How many have been held slaves to the fear of death. Many people are so afraid of death that they will not attend a funeral service. 3. Finally, what a beautiful and glorious hope the shepherd God holds out to us of the future life, toward which He is willing to lead us through all our life's journey. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Our Good Shepherd said to His friends just before He went away, "In My Father's house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*) *Personal relationship with God*:—"My Shepherd." Every believer is not only permitted to say, but has that within him which constrains him to say, "O God, Thou art my God." It should be to us a source of unfailing comfort to know that His nature undergoes no change or modification when it is directed towards us and the exigencies of our condition. The wisdom, the power, the goodness with which He controls the affairs of the universe are in their measure available for our individual needs. And as the shepherd knows each sheep of the flock, and calleth it by its name, so God knoweth each of us, and gives Himself to us with the whole energy and affectionateness of His being. There exists between God and ourselves a distinct personal relation. He recognises the individuality of every human soul, and ascribes to it a separate worth. Bound as we are by innumerable ties to the great brotherhood of men, we are, in the deepest centre of our life, isolated from them, and stand before God alone. Under many current systems of thought this individuality is endangered. Beyond the ken of an omnipresent spirit and the power of an almighty friend we cannot go. He is about our path and our bed, and the secret thoughts and desires and needs of all hearts are open to Him. We may be weak, obscure, despised, but He thinks of us with as special a care and as devoted a love as if we alone, in all the vast universe of men, were dependent upon Him and claimed His gracious aid. (*James Stuart.*) *Confidence in the Shepherd*:—It is not as a literary gem, rich and rare though it be in that respect, that its chief attraction lies. What renders it so exceedingly precious to the experimental believer are the blessedness of its truths and the sublimity of its sentiments—the delightful spirit it breathes and the hallowed impressions it produces. By it the faith of God's people in every age has been confirmed, their hearts have been gladdened, their hopes elevated, and their strength renewed. "The Lord is My Shepherd." Our faith is greatly lacking as respects three things—1. It is not sufficiently confiding. 2. It is not sufficiently realising. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." 3. It is not sufficiently appropriating. (*Anon.*) *A deep consciousness of God*:—I. THE DEEP CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD THAT PERVADES THE PSALM. Its great outstanding thought is God. And God, too, present to the mind and heart of the writer: a living, personal agent, who touches his life at every point, and with whom he holds conscious and happy intercourse. Here we have a

man evidently walking not by sight but by faith. This consciousness of God manifested itself in two ways. 1. He found in his own humble employment as a shepherd a representation of God, and a means of fellowship with Him. By the thoughtfulness, tenderness, sympathy, and care he exercised in his shepherd calling he learned and realised the heart and character of God. 2. His daily employment was to him a symbol of God, and of God's relation to him. II. THE RELATION OF GOD TO THE INDIVIDUAL LIFE. Nowhere is God presented in such close relations with individual life and experience as in the Psalms of David. We have here the precious scriptural doctrine of a special providence. It is objected to this doctrine, that it is derogatory to the greatness of God that He should be thought of as concerning Himself with the minutiae of life. But "great" and "little" are only relative terms. It enhances His greatness that He can comprehend at once the vast and the minute. III. THE HAPPINESS OF THE MAN WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD. One characteristic of the Psalm is its repose, its serene enjoyment. IV. THE MAN WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD CAN LOOK HOPEFULLY INTO THE FUTURE. In order to do this he must be reconciled to God, and regenerated and renewed in the spirit of His mind. (*Alexander Field.*) *The God of the world as seen by the good:*—He appears as a Shepherd to the good. Those who follow this Shepherd are truly blest. 1. They are blest with deliverance from the fear of want. "I shall not want," or as some render it, "I do not want." The fear of "want" is one of the most disturbing fiends of the human soul. Men are everywhere fearing that they shall lack a something which they regard as vital to their interests. Godliness expels this fear from the human heart by inspiring unbounded confidence in the bountifulness of heaven. 2. They are blest with the enjoyment of satisfying good. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." He has allayed my appetite, dispelled my anxieties, satisfied my nature, and caused me to "lie down" amidst the affluence of His love. 3. They are blest in being calmly led along the river of life. "He leadeth me beside the still waters." 4. They are blest with the reinvigoration of soul. "He restoreth my soul." There is a wear and tear of soul as well as of body. The holiest and the strongest angel would soon get exhausted were it left to depend upon itself. God is the strength of all finite intelligences, however pure and strong. 5. They are blest with being divinely conducted into the paths of rectitude. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." There are as many paths of life as there are men. As every star has its own orbit, so every man has his own particular path. No two men can walk in exactly the same way, from the diversity of their faculty and their training. All human paths are of two descriptions, the morally right and the morally wrong. The good man's path, whether it be that of a labourer, mechanic, artist, poet, philosopher, statesman, king, or preacher, is "a path of righteousness." 6. They are blest with the moral heroism in their march to eternity. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." (*Homilist.*) *The life of faith:*—I. FAITH'S RECOGNITION (ver. 1). "The Lord is my Shepherd." A spiritual recognition made through the medium of His surroundings. Faith makes the same recognition to-day. It is an old recognition. It is a comforting recognition. Recognising God as our Shepherd, what an infinitude of tenderness, watchfulness, love, and carefulness that recognition involves! "I shall not want." This is no guarantee against poverty; because poverty may be, in the Divine estimation, better for us than riches. It is no warrant for indolence or thriftlessness. Work and diligence in it are again and again commended. No want would be universal were it not for these two widespread evils! II. FAITH'S EXPERIENCE (vers. 2, 3, 5). Ver. 2 expresses repose rather than feeding. Repose in "pastures of tender grass," hard by the "waters of quietness." It is also expressive of satisfaction. "To lie down." Sheep stand to eat, but lie when filled. Life only finds satisfaction in God; the world is too small to fill the soul. The fulness of the Godhead alone can meet this moral necessity. Ver. 3 sets forth restoration and guidance. Leadeth, not driveth. Law drives, love leads. Example is more forceful than command. Eternal footprints He has left on the pathway of virtue, patience, purity, self-sacrifice, benevolence, obedience, that we may plant our feet in them and be as He was in this world. Ver. 5 suggests plenty and protection. God gives banquets in unlikely places and at unexpected times. III. FAITH'S PROSPECT (vers. 4, 6). 1. Celestial attendants all the days of life. 2. Companionship in the shadowed valley. Inspiring confidence and courage; and preventing unrest and disquietude. (*J. O. Keen, D.D.*) *What the Lord is to the believer:*—What the Lord is to the believer is here set forth in a poem peculiarly Oriental in imagery. Two figures are

employed, the Shepherd and the Host. The one is expressed, the other is implied. Two figures are employed because either alone is inadequate. Each is complementary to the other. The second uniformly is an advance upon the first. Seven suggestions are very prominent. 1. All wants are met in God. 2. All energy and joy are supplied in God. 3. All needed guidance. 4. All blessed companionship. 5. All security. 6. All comfort in sorrow. 7. An abiding-place for homeless souls. All this depends on our faith, whether we can appropriate God and truly say, "My Shepherd." It is curious to notice how the second figure is left to be inferred. Why did not David, in introducing the second part, say, "Jehovah is my Host"? Perhaps because the feelings of this relationship waited to be revealed (John i. 11, 12). God is in Christ more than host, and we are more than guests. He is our Father, and we are His sons and daughters. Hence our welcome home, and our dwelling-place there. He is ours and we are His, and all that is His is ours. To the Jew He was Shepherd, to the Christian believer He is Father. (*Arthur T. Pierson, D.D.*)

*The Shepherd figure for Jesus:*—"Shepherd." That precious word for God was uttered first by Jacob—himself once a shepherd—as he lay a-dying in his hieroglyphed chamber; and with the long thoughts of old age went back to the imagery of his early life, speaking of God as having "shepherded him all his life long." All through the Bible the golden thread runs, until in its closing pages we read of the Lamb who leads His flock to the rivers of the waters of life. The Eastern shepherd occupied quite a unique position towards his flock; and a friendship sprang up between him and the dumb creatures of his care to which there is no counterpart among ourselves. He can do almost as he wills with any of them, going freely in and out amongst them, without exciting the slightest symptom of alarm. Now, all this is true of the Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep.

1. He has a shepherd's heart, beating with pure and generous love that counted not His life-blood too dear a price to pay down as our ransom.
2. He has a shepherd's eye, that takes in the whole flock, and misses not even the poor sheep wandering away on the mountains cold.
3. He has a shepherd's faithfulness, which will never fail nor forsake, nor leave us comfortless, nor flee when He seeth the wolf coming.
- He has a shepherd's strength, so that He is well able to deliver us from the jaw of the lion or the paw of the bear.
4. He has a shepherd's tenderness; no lamb so tiny that He will not carry it, no saint so weak that He will not gently lead, no soul so faint that He will not give it rest. He pities as a father. He comforts as a mother. His gentleness makes great. He covers us with His feathers, soft, warm, and downy, and under His wings do we trust. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

*The pasture gate:*—If David's shepherd life had furnished nothing else than the materials for this wonderful pastoral ode we should all be inclined to say that no period of David's history would have compensated the Church for the loss of his shepherd life. Yet the Psalm is not the utterance of the shepherd days, though it perpetuates their memory. This peaceful idyll is a voice out of the maturer life of the Psalmist; a voice that tells that peace and rest of heart depend not upon the absence of life's burdens, nor on the presence of nature's tranquillising scenes, but solely upon the shepherding of God. The keynote of the whole song is—God's servant finds his all in God. He wants nothing. All needs are met for him by that one fact—the Lord is my Shepherd. The problem of life is thus reduced to its very simplest statement. "But one thing is needful." The possession of all gifts is included in possessing the Father. Then the true end of every man's life is to become one of God's flock. And here the figure, while it magnifies the wisdom and tenderness of God, correspondingly depreciates the wisdom of man. The dependence of man upon God must be just as absolute as that of the sheep upon the shepherd. The guidance of the life cannot be shared between God and man, any more than between the shepherd and the sheep. There is a comforting assurance in the comparison of man to a sheep. A sheep is not a wild animal. He is a property. And man is God's valuable property. The Spirit leads us forth into the pastures.

1. Provision is made for two sides of man's life in his new relation to God. A godly life, if it be healthful, must be both an active and a contemplative life.
2. Provision is made for restoration. "He restoreth my soul." Here we see restoration under three phases. (1) Forgiveness. (2) Rest and refreshment. (3) Righteousness or rightness. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*)

*The Lord a Shepherd:*—I. GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE NOURISHMENT. One of the first duties of an Eastern shepherd was to provide ample pasture for the flock, to lead them hither and thither that plenty might be found. The Lord, as David's Shepherd, would make provision for his necessities. And not for David only, but for all His people "the Lord will



provide." We have here—1. A repudiation of naturalism. The advocates of this system maintain that though God made the world and its noblest inhabitant—man, He now feels no interest in the work of His hands. "He is so great," say they, "that it would be beneath Him to notice the little things of earth or the concerns of man." The love, compassion, and Fatherly goodness of God are here ignored. A meagre view of the Divine character is this. God is a Shepherd, and will never neglect His flock. 2. A truth to which God has pledged Himself. God cares for less important creatures than man: the blade of grass, the lily, the sparrow (Matt. vi. 24-34). II. THAT GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE PROTECTION. It was as really the duty of the shepherd to protect his flock from harm, as to supply them with food. He would even expose himself to danger for the safety of his flock. David did when he grappled with the lion and the bear. God protects His people. 1. The good have enemies—(1) Numerous. (2) Cunning. (3) Powerful. 2. The Great Shepherd is engaged to protect them. (1) He protects their bodies. He gives "His angels charge," &c. (2) He gives spiritual protection. He is—to change the figure—a "Shield," "a wall of fire," &c. God is "more than all" who are against His people. III. THAT GOD GIVES HIS PEOPLE REST. God, as a Shepherd, will give His followers rest. 1. Here. From storm within, and from oppression, &c., without. 2. Hereafter. He will take His own to be in His presence for ever. Learn—1. The importance of being "the sheep of His pasture." Only those who are such have any claim to this provision, protection, and rest. 2. The value of trust in Him who has condescended to sustain to us these gracious relationships. (*John Hill.*)

*The Lord our Shepherd.*—I. HOW HE REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE SHEEP. 1. As the good Shepherd Love (John x. 11)—His death. 2. As the great Shepherd Power (Heb. xiii. 20)—His Resurrection. 3. As the chief Shepherd Glory (1 Pet. v. 4)—Second Advent. II. WHAT HE DOES FOR THE SHEEP. Gives His life for them and to them (Zech. xiii. 7; Matt. xxvi. 31; John x. 11, 15, 28). Seeks them out and brings them home (Ezek. xxxiv. 12; Luke xv. 4, 5). Gathers them and heals them (Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 4). Guides and feeds them (Psa. xxiii. 1-3; John x. 3, 4, 9). Protects and preserves them (Jer. xxxi. 10; John x. 28). III. WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM THE SHEEP. That they should—1. Hear His voice (John x. 3). 2. Follow His leading (John x. 4; Matt. ix. 9; John xxi. 22). 3. Rest under His protection (Psa. xxiii. 1, 2). (*E. H. Hopkins.*)

*The song of the flock.*—View it—I. AS EXPRESSING THANKFULNESS FOR THE PAST. Jehovah, all-sufficient, has been my Shepherd. Many there are who can see no better law or principle regulating the allotments of their daily life than accident and capricious fortune. They see the shuttles of apparent chance darting hither and thither in the loom of existence. They do not see that the shuttle is in the hands of the Great Artificer. Life is not a mere kaleidoscope. II. AS IMPLYING CONFIDENCE IN THE PRESENT. Jesus, all-sufficient, is my Shepherd. How blessed thus to repose our present in God, and to say, "Undertake Thou for me." He does not consult our short-sighted wisdom in what He does. A necessary result of this confidence in the wisdom of God's shepherd dealings will be contentment with our lot, whatever it is. And if we thus confide in God He will confide in us. III. AS EXPRESSING TRUST FOR THE FUTURE. Jehovah, all-sufficient, shall be my Shepherd. That dark future. How many are speaking of it as such. It is in the Shepherd's keeping, and we may well leave it there. Let us banish all unholy distrust of the future. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*)

*The shepherd-king of Israel.*—We do not know at what period of David's life this Psalm was written, but it sounds as if it were the work of his later years. It is very beautiful to see the old king looking back with such vivid and loving remembrance to his childhood's occupation, and bringing up again to memory in his palace the green valleys, the gentle streams, the dark glens where he had led his flocks in the old days. The faith which looks back and says, It is all very good, is not less than that which looks forward and says, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. The train of thought in the Psalm is clear and obvious. The Psalm falls into two halves. I. THE DIVINE SHEPHERD AND HIS LEADING OF HIS FLOCK. The various methods of God's leading of His flock, or rather, we should say, the various regions into which He leads them, are described in order. These are rest, work, sorrow. 1. God leads His sheep into rest. The Psalm puts the rest and refreshment first, as being the most marked characteristic of God's dealings. It is so. The years are years of unbroken continuity of outward blessings. The reign of afflictions is ordinarily measured by days. But it is not mainly of outward blessings that the Psalmist is thinking. They are precious chiefly as emblems of the better spiritual

gifts. The image describes the sweet rest of the soul in communion with God, in whom alone the hungry heart finds food that satisfies. This rest and refreshment has for its consequence the restoration of the soul, which includes in it both the invigoration of the natural life by the outward sort of blessings, and the quickening and restoration of the spiritual life by the inward feeding upon God, and repose in Him. 2. God guides us into work. The quiet mercies are not in themselves the end of our Shepherd's guidance; they are means to an end, and that is—work. Life is not a fold for the sheep to lie down in, but a road for them to walk on. Rest is to fit for work, work is to sweeten rest. All this is emphatically true of the spiritual life. It is not well that our chief object should be to enjoy the consolations of religion; it is better to seek first to do the duties enjoined by religion. Joy in God is the strength of work for God, but work for God is the perpetuation of joy in God. Here is the figurative expression of the great evangelical principle, that works of righteousness must follow, not precede, the restoration of the soul. We are justified, not by works, but for works. The basis of obedience is the sense of salvation. 3. God leads His people through sorrow. The "valley of the shadow" means any and every gloomy valley of weeping through which we have to pass. Such sunless gorges as we have all to traverse at some time or other. It is never given to the human heart to meditate of the future without some foreboding. Some evils may come; some will probably come; one at least is sure to come. So there is never pure hope in any heart that wisely considers the future. But to the Christian heart there may be this, the conviction that sorrow, when it comes, will not be evil, because God will be with us. Strange as it may sound, the presence of Him who sends the sorrow is the best help to bear it. II. GOD AS THE HOST, AND US AS THE GUESTS AT HIS TABLE AND THE DWELLERS IN HIS HOUSE. All is here intensified. 1. God supplies our wants in the very midst of strife. The mercy is more strikingly portrayed as being granted not only before toil, but in warfare. Life is a sore fight; but to the Christian man, in spite of all the tumult, life is a festal banquet. Always the foe; always the table. This is the form under which experience of the past is presented in the second portion—joy in conflict, rest and food even in the strife. Upon that there is built a hope which transcends that in the previous portion of the Psalm. As to this life, "goodness and mercy shall follow us." Higher than all rises the confidence of the closing words,—*"I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."* This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future, and the one great lesson taught us by all the vicissitudes of life. Yonder we sit down with the Shepherd, the Master of the house, at His table in His kingdom. Far off, and lost to sight, are all the enemies. We fear no change; we go no more out. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Shepherd-King of men:* —I. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. David believed that all the attributes of the shepherd-relation and service belonged to God. 1. God's intimate acquaintance with us. 2. Intense practical sympathy. Once a clergyman told the wife of a besotted drunkard that the Lord had abandoned her husband to his evil habits. Said she, "Do you say that God has abandoned my husband to his sin? Then it is high time I should stand up for him, and see him through. I will be God for him if God is of your mind." It was a noble speech from a noble-hearted woman. 3. Disinterestedness. He "giveth His life for the sheep." What will not a mother do for her child? At its service she puts the whole store of her being. Carry this thought up, as Christ taught us, into the sphere of the infinite, and you will have gained some conception of the disinterested tenderness and unselfish love of God. II. RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. "*My Shepherd.*" He appropriates God. Learn to use this syllable of endearment, and the blessedness and power of David's Psalm are at once felt. III. CONFIDENCE IN GOD. "*I shall not want.*" If we believe that God is the Shepherd of His people, we must conclude that He will supply all their wants. If we have learnt to call Him "*My Shepherd,*" then we shall confidently add, "*I shall not want.*" (*George Bainton.*) *The Divine Shepherd:*—What with post and rail fences, and our pride in Southdown, Astrakhan, and Flemish varieties of sheep, there is no use now of the old-time shepherd. Such an one had abundance of opportunity of becoming a poet, being out-of-doors twelve hours the day, and oftentimes waking up in the night on the hills. If the stars, or the torrents, or the sun, or the flowers, had anything to say, he was very apt to hear it. The Ettrick Shepherd of Scotland, who afterwards took his seat in the brilliant circle of Wilson and Lockhart, got his wonderful poetic inspiration in the ten years in which he was watching the flocks of Mr. Laidlaw. There is often a sweet poetry in the rugged prose of the Scotch shepherd. One of

these Scotch shepherds lost his only son, and he knelt down in prayer, and was overheard to say, "O Lord, it has seemed good in Thy providence to take from me the staff of my right hand at the time when to us sand-blind mortals I seemed to be most in need of it; and how I shall climb up the hill of sorrow and auld age without it Thou mayst ken, but I dinna." I. OF THE SHEPHERD'S PLAID. No splendid apparel, but rough strong apparel fit for his hard work. The Lord our Shepherd coming out to hunt the lost sheep, puts on no regal robe, but the plain garment of humanity. No; in the wardrobe of heaven He left the sandals of light, the girdles of beauty, the robes of power, and put on our soiled and tattered raiment. The work of saving this world was rough work, rugged work, hard work; and Jesus put on the raiment, the plain raiment, of our flesh. The storms were to beat Him, the crowds were to jostle Him, the dust was to sprinkle Him, the mobs were to pursue Him. O, Shepherd of Israel! leave at home Thy bright array. For Thee, what streams to ford, what nights all unsheltered!

II. THE SHEPHERD'S CROOK. This was a rod with a curve at the end which, when a sheep was going astray, was thrown over its neck; and in that way it was pulled back. There is no animal that struggles more violently than a sheep when you corner it and catch hold of it. Down the glen I see a group of men around a lost sheep. A ploughman comes along and seizes the sheep, and tries to pacify it; but it is more frightened than ever. A miller comes along, puts down his grist, and caresses the sheep, and it seems as if it would die of fright. After a while some one breaks through the thicket. He says, "Let me have the poor thing." He comes up and lays his arms around the sheep, and it is immediately quiet. Who is the last man that comes? It is the shepherd. Ah, be not afraid of the Shepherd's crook. It is never used on you, save in mercy, to pull you back. The hard cold iceberg of trouble will melt in the warm Gulf Stream of Divine sympathy.

III. THE SHEPHERD'S DOGS. They watch the straying sheep, and drive them back again. Every shepherd has his dog—from the nomads of the Bible times, down to the Scotch herdsman watching his flocks on the Grampian Hills. Our Shepherd employs the criticisms and persecutions of the world as His dogs. There are those, you know, whose whole work it is to watch the inconsistencies of Christians, and bark at them. If one of God's sheep gets astray, the world howls. It ought to do us good to know that we are thus watched. It ought to put us on our guard. They cannot bite us if we stay near the Shepherd. The more dogs take after you, the quicker you will get to the gate. The bloody muzzle of the papacy hounded fifty million Protestants into glory.

IV. THE SHEPHERD'S PASTURE GROUNDS. The old shepherds used to take the sheep upon the mountains in the summer, and dwell in the valleys in the winter. It was well for the sheep to be out of doors. Wells were dug for them, and the shepherd led his flock wherever he would: nobody disputed his right. So the Lord our Shepherd has a large pasture-ground. He takes us in the summer to the mountains, and in the winter to the valleys. Warm days of prosperity come, and we stand on sun-gilt Sabbaths, and on hills of transfiguration; and we are so high up we can catch a glimpse of the pinnacles of the heavenly city. Then cold wintry days of trouble come, and we go down into the valley of sickness, want, and bereavement, and we say, "Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" But, blessed be God, the Lord's sheep can find pasture anywhere.

V. THE SHEPHERD'S FOLD. At shearing-time—a very joyful time to all the country round—the sheep were put in a walled enclosure, where they could easily be counted, and any wanting would at once be missed. This was the sheep-fold. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Jesus as "my" Shepherd*:—Some time ago a gentleman taking holiday in a rural district came across a little boy minding sheep. The stranger entered into conversation with the lad, and asked him if he knew the 23rd Psalm. The little fellow answered "No." "Then let me teach you the first sentence," said the gentleman. "Say these words after me, 'The—Lord—is—my—Shepherd!'" The boy repeated the words. "Now repeat each word again, and count a finger as you do so; in this way." And he told off a finger at each of the words. "And when you come to that word *my*, grip your fourth finger tightly with your other hand, and never forget, my lad, that the Lord is not only *a* Shepherd but *your* Shepherd." The stranger went his way, and the boy told his parents at night of the strange gentleman and his lesson. During the following winter the snow fell heavily in that district. One day the boy and his sheep were missed. They were discovered in a deep drift. After the sheep had been dug out, the search-party came upon the dead body of the boy—his left fourth finger tightly grasped in his right hand. Now the sequel. A



distinguished Baptist minister was quite recently preaching Sunday school anniversary sermons in a northern town. Not far from the chapel lived the M.P. for the district. He was rich toward man, but not rich toward God. He had a great fondness for hearing children's voices; and when he heard of the anniversary services he decided to attend the afternoon meeting for the children. The preacher told the simple story given above, and presently the service ended. During the following days the rich man was taken ill, and died somewhat suddenly. When the doctors came to examine him, they found him already dead, and clasping his left fourth finger with his right hand. Not in vain did the stranger teach the shepherd lad; not in vain did the preacher tell the simple child's story; not in vain is the sequel now printed. Let every one who reads this remember as he goes through life that "The Lord is my Shepherd."

*Jehovah*:—This name Jehovah is, as I may so speak, the most eminent of all the names of God; it carries that in it which is all in all, and, as it were, above all; namely, the verity or fidelity of God, making good all His goodness to us. The Hebrews make it to be an invariable and ineffable name, and it hath no pronouns affixed unto it, nor doth it admit any demonstrating article before it, and it wants the number of multitude; it is a name singular and proper to God. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*)

*The properties of a good shepherd*:—1. One is science: I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, saith Christ (John x. 14). A skilful knowledge, by which he must understand how to handle them or deal with them. 2. A second is providence. The good shepherd provideth pasture and water for the sheep, and always that which is wholesome, lest the sheep rot and die; as he is not negligent that the sheep want feeding, so he is diligent that they have wholesome feeding (Ezek. xxxiv. 13). The Lord will provide sufficient pasture, and the best too. 3. A third is guidance. He doth not leave them to the misguidance of sin or Satan, or the world, or their own hearts. 4. A fourth is vigilance. The sheep are weaponless, weak, unarmed creatures, and they have many and strong enemies, as the lion and the wolf and the dog. Jacob watched night and day (Gen. xxxi. 40). Such a Shepherd is God over His people; His eye is ever over them (1 Pet. iii. 12). 5. To which, as a part, may be added defence. He is my defence, saith David (Psa. lix. 9). The Prophet Zachary calls Him a wall of fire round about His people (Zach. ii. 5). 6. The good shepherd does not only provide pasture but coverture also for the sheep: he hath his shady places from the sun, and retiring places from the storms, to refresh, as well as to flesh the sheep (Psa. cxxi. 5). 7. A seventh property of a good shepherd is tender prudence, for in a flock of sheep there is great diversity: one part may be strong sheep, and they are driven; another part may be weak lambs, and they are sometimes carried by the shepherd. Some of the sheep may be sound and well, others may be diseased; some keep in better, others are more apt to stray (Isa. xl. 11). 8. Lastly, diligence and care, lest any one sheep be lost and perish. The good shepherd would not lose any of the least of all the flock. (*Ibid.*)

*Choice properties of sheep*:—1. One property in them (which the Scripture doth express) is obedience (John x. 4). 2. Another property of sheep is meekness and patience. 3. A third property of sheep is usefulness. 4. A fourth property of sheep is unity and peaceableness. (*Ibid.*)

*The chiefest Shepherd to be yours*:—But more particularly thus, you have—(1) A most wise Shepherd. (2) You have a most tender Shepherd; and as He is tender in corrections, so in His directions (Gen. xxxiii. 13). (3) You have a most faithful Shepherd; One who will never intermit His care over you. (4) You have the most loving Shepherd; He loves you with the highest degrees of love in all kinds. (5) Lastly, you have the most rewardful Shepherd. Have you such a Shepherd as Jehovah? Then be counselled in a few particulars. 1. Be contented with His pasture. God is pleased to feed us sometimes in the valleys with much plenty, variety, ease, delight; and sometimes, again, He is pleased to drive us to the mountains, to a shorter, sharper condition of life; if we be His sheep, we must be still contented with His pasture. 2. Carefully regard His voice. 3. Thrive under His feedings. 4. Cleave together as the flock of one shepherd. The wolf, it is his property to scatter the flock, and then to make a prey of one after another. 5. Lastly, if God be your Shepherd, then be not disquieted at His dealings with you. (*Ibid.*)

*I shall not want*.—*A trustful confidence*:—The confidence was well grounded. 1. You shall not want a guardian; I will protect you. 2. You shall not want a justifying righteousness, by which you may have a good right and title to a place in My kingdom. 3. You shall not want a meetness for the kingdom of glory. I will make you free from the accursed bonds of sin. 4. You shall not want persevering

grace. I, who have "begun a good work in you, will perform it." 5. You shall not want spiritual refreshment. 6. You shall not want needful support. The world shall not overcome you. You shall gain the victory over its smiles and frowns. The Great Shepherd will crown you with His loving-kindness for ever. (*J. Jennings.*) *The Divine supply of human want*:—Then the useful application of all this unto ourselves. I. IN WHAT SENSE THE ASSERTION IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD. 1. There are two sorts of things: some which do conduce to make the condition good and happy; others which do serve to make the condition smooth and delightful. As about an house there are pillars and rafters, &c., which are the bones, as it were, and absolute ingredients; and there are the varnishings and paintings which do set forth the house. Or, as in a garden, there are profitable fruits, and there are pleasant flowers only to look on and smell. So it is with us: there are some things which make our hearts truly good, and tend to our everlasting salvation; there are other things which do only serve to cheer and refresh us in our passage. Now, when David saith, I shall not want, they conjecture this to be the sense: Nothing shall be wanting to me which concerns the making of my estate truly happy; though delightful may be wanting, yet principals shall not. 2. Some things are (1) redundant, (2) necessary. Those things are redundant without which a man may well pass over his condition of life. As a man may well serve God, though he have not an estate of riches or honour comparable to another, or always equal to itself. Those things are necessary without which a person cannot well serve God, as our daily bread, for which Christ would have us to pray: our bodies cannot be fitted to duty without these external necessary supplies of food and raiment. Even a good man, a David, may want superfluities; his table may not be variously furnished, nor his garments gaudily embroidered, nor his coffers excessively stuffed and piled. But yet he shall not want necessities, though he be not sure of plenty, yet of enough (*Isa. xxxiii. 16*). He doth not say his wines are sure, but his waters; and he doth not say his feast, but his bread shall not fail. Though he hath not always what he needs not, yet he shall have always what is needful. Though he hath not the lace, yet he hath the garment; though he hath not the sauce, yet he hath the meat; though he hath not the palace, yet he hath the chamber; though he hath not the softness, yet he hath the bed; though he hath not what he may spare, yet he hath what he may use. 3. Of necessary things, some are desirable, and some seasonable. Those things are desirable which have any kind of good in them; those things are seasonable which have a kind of conveniency or fitness in them. It is granted that there are many desirable goods which a good man hath not many times. Yet no seasonable good shall he want: When health is good for him, Hezekiah shall recover; when liberty is good for him, Joseph shall be loosed; when favour and dignity are good for him, then David shall return and be settled. It is good for me, saith David, that I was afflicted. A good man may want this thing and that thing, but he shall not want anything that is good, nor when it may be good for him. 4. Again, divines say that good things may be had two ways, either explicitly, when a person enjoyeth the individual or particular things (suppose health, strength, liberty, friends, and other comforts); interpretatively, when a person enjoyeth that which is equivalent to those things (a citizen may not have a garden, a farm, sheep or oxen, yet he hath thousands in his purse which are equivalent to all these). Thus do they say of a good man, that either he enjoyeth the very particular good things which he needs, or else those things which are equivalent to them, nay, far exceeding of them. Though he cannot have much lands, yet he hath many graces; though he cannot have the countenance of men, yet he hath the favour of God; though he cannot enjoy quiet abroad, yet he settleth peace within his conscience. He that hath but one diamond may have far more than he who hath a thousand stones digged out of the quarry. 5. You must distinguish 'twixt absence and 'twixt indigence. Absence is when something is not present; indigence or want is when a needful good is not present. If a man were to walk, and had not a staff, here were something absent; if a man were to walk, and had but one leg, here were something whereof he were indigent. It is confessed that there are many good things which are absent from a good person, but no good thing which he wants or is indigent of. If the good be absent, and I need it not, this is not want; he that walks without his cloak walks well enough, for he needs it not. 6. There are two sorts of wants: in some part of the condition, in the heart and affection; as a man may abound in his condition, and yet want in that of his affection. He may have abundance in honour, in estate, in wealth, and yet through an endless covetousness and vain discontent he may be in want, still

complaining, murmuring, craving. So a man may want something in his external condition, and yet abound and not want in that of his inward affection. Though he hath not the outward thing, yet he wants it not, for he is contented with the absence of it. 7. Lastly, you must distinguish 'twixt real wants and imaginary wants,—a want to the person and a want to the corruption: a child is sometimes clamorous for a knife, and sometimes he cries for bread; when he cries for bread his father ariseth and fetcheth the loaf, the child shall not want bread; but when he cries for the knife this he shall not have, the father will not satisfy his wantonness, though he will supply his wants. Our corruptions are still craving, and they are always inordinate; they can find more wants than God needs to supply. God will see that His people shall not want, but withal He will never engage Himself to the satisfying of their corruptions, though He doth to the supply of their conditions. It is one thing what the sick man wants, another what his disease wants. Your ignorance, your discontents, your pride, your unthankful hearts may make you to believe that you dwell in a barren land, far from mercies (as melancholy makes a person to imagine that he is drowning, or killing, &c.), whereas if God did open your eyes as He did Hagar's, you might see fountains and streams, mercies and blessings sufficient; though not many, yet enough; though not so rich, yet proper and every way convenient for your good and comfort. How far the verity of this assertion extends, whether to soul and body, to spirituals and temporals. I answer briefly, it holds firm of both; both soul and body are the object of Divine providence and of Divine love, and both of them are serviceable to Divine glory. 1. That the soul shall not want, the Scriptures are abundant. It shall have grace and glory: there is redemption for it, righteousness for it, sanctification for it, and salvation; there is the Word to help it, the Sacraments to help it, afflictions to help it, and the Spirit of God still to help it—(1) to justifying grace, (2) to sanctifying grace, (3) to strengthening and assisting grace, (4) to comforting and refreshing grace: you shall never want proper comforts, nor seasonable. 2. That the body shall not want in respect of temporals; take them in any kind, and as suitable, and necessary, and seasonable. How it may appear that the people of God shall not want, and why. (1) It may appear by a series of experimental instances. (2) It may appear by the wonderful supplies of God unto His people rather than they should want; sometimes God hath created helps unto them—manna in the wilderness. (3) Shall not heaven and earth pass away before any one word of God doth fail? (4) Fourthly, consider His present donations. (5) His special affection to His people. (6) His singular relations. The Lord is to His people as a father to his children (2 Cor. vi. 18). (7) Lastly, take the acquaintances and acknowledgments of all the servants of God that they have made unto the Lord and delivered under their own hands (Gen. xxxii. 1). But now it is objected against all this, that there are no people in the world that are in such want as the people of God for outward things. You know that all these outward things are promised not peremptorily, but (1) with condition, if good for them; (2) with exception of the Cross. Now I come to the application of this point to ourselves. Shall not the flock or people of God want? Then you who take yourselves to be the people of His pasture, give ear and hearken this day unto two things. 1. Your sins: That you suffer your hearts so to be cracked with fears, and your minds to be filled with cares. Thou hast no reason at all to conclude that thou shalt want. Consider, what hath God been unto thee already? What is the nature of God for the present: Is He like man, that He should change? Was He God all-sufficient? is He not so still? thy loving and compassionate God? is He not so still? thy almighty God? is He not so still? Is He deceitful? or is His hand shortened? Doth He cease to be God, or to be thy God? If the fountain still lives and runs, why shouldest thou imagine to die by thirst? If the sun still shines, why shouldest thou fancy nothing but darkness? What is the promise of God for the future? Thou hast all the reason in the world to conclude that thou shalt not want, when thou considerest that fulness, infinite fulness which is in God. But Divine goodness is such a common as cannot be overlaid: though there be not water enough for a few ships in the river, yet there is water and room enough for all the ships in the world on the sea. That great God who feeds a whole world every day, He is able enough to sustain thee all thy days. That willingness that is in God to do thee good. 2. Your duty: To be humbled for vexatious cares and fears, and then to cast your care on God. The motives, which shall be drawn—From the evil inconveniences of not trusting on the Lord your Shepherd to supply your wants. They are very many. It is a dishonourable thing not to cast your care on the Lord.



(1) You do dishonour to God. (2) Your holy profession : how apt are people to fasten all miscarriages of godly men upon godliness itself. (3) It is an unpeaceable thing : you lose all your peace until ye can rest upon God by faith for your supplies. (4) It is a prejudicial thing. (5) It is a very sinful thing : of all sins unbelief is one of the greatest, and a causeless unbelief is the greatest of all. There are three things in God, whereof if a man be ignorant he will be much in cares and fears of want. 1. One is God's fulness. If he apprehends not a fulness in all and every of God's attributes, his soul will fear and care. If I conceive that God is fully able to supply one want, and not many, or many of my wants, but not all, or all my personal wants, but not my domestical wants ; all my wants heretofore when I was a single person, but not all now, when my charge increaseth and multiplies by children and servants. He who thus conceives of God, no more than of a half God, of a God of the valleys and not of the mountains, one who can supply low and mean, but not high and great wants ; few and not many wants, former wants, but not present, present but not future wants, extremely mistakes the fountain of supplies, and must necessarily be tossed and crucified with perpetual waves and darts of rolling fears and cutting cares. 2. God's affectionateness. 3. God's immutability or unchangeableness. David reasoneth so in this place. Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want. The Lord is my God, He hath undertaken for me all my life, therefore I am not solicitous. Christians are exceeding faulty in this, to make sure of God, and yet it is the way to make sure all His mercies. The mathematicians must have some principles granted unto them, and if once you assent unto those truths they will thence infer many infallible and undeniable conclusions. Among Christians this should be a principle made firm that God is their God, and then they may quietly sit down, and confidently conclude all comforts for soul and body. Be diligent in your callings. He who eats the bread of idleness, may well resolve to drink the waters of carefulness. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*)

*The Lord our Shepherd* :—The relations subsisting between man and the lower animals play no insignificant part in the formation of human character and the discipline of human life. No relations appeal to heart and imagination more than those of shepherd and sheep. The emblem is dear to us yet, even to the dwellers in town and city. The emblem is dearer still, because it has been confirmed and hallowed by the lips of One greater than David. I. WE WANT NOURISHMENT. Body, mind, spirit, each need this. II. WE WANT REFRESHMENT. The shepherd brings his flock to the "waters." As pasturage is an emblem of that which nourishes, so water is an emblem of all that refreshes. The difference between the pleasures which the devil gives and those which the Lord gives, is just this—the former intoxicate, but these exhilarate. Think of all the pleasure of simple, innocent recreation—of nature, music, poetry, and art ; of friendship and the pure affections of the home. Let us never forget that the rapids and the cataract are sometimes only farther down in the very same stream, beside the still waters of which the Lord is leading His people. There is a boundary beyond which lawful pleasure passes into lawless. III. WE WANT REST. The shepherd makes the flock lie down in some cool, shady place. So every night the Lord maketh us to lie down. And He provides rest for the soul also. There is too little repose in the life of most of us. Too much bustle, too much impatience. IV. WE WANT GUIDANCE. Often we are perplexed as to what is our right path ; and when we have found it we are liable to go astray. V. WE WANT RESTORATION. From sickness and from wilfulness. He restores when we are weak and weary. VI. WE WANT THE COMFORT OF PROTECTION. Through the hilly gorge—even through death. (*T. Campbell Finlayson.*)

*David's confidence in the prospect of the future* :—The grounds of David's freedom from anxiety are—1. THE RELATION IN WHICH THE LORD STANDS TO HIM. It is not the mere utterance of a promise, but his recollection of the fact that the Lord is his Shepherd. Now, in order to see God sustaining such gracious character towards us, we need—1. A view of God as a gracious God ; One who is gracious to sinners. This we can only know as we see Him in Christ. 2. And we must know this gracious God to be OUR God. II. GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIM. "Thou art with me." We may think little of this presence, but the godly man thinks much, and has habitually this recollection in his mind. III. GOD'S PRESENT MERCIES. Probably David was thinking more of spiritual mercies than of temporal. He notices—1. Their abundance. 2. The safety with which he enjoys them. 3. The strange circumstances under which these mercies were enjoyed, "in the presence of mine enemies." 4. The honour which the Lord puts on him while blessing him, "Thou anointest my head with oil." After having reviewed these mercies which

he enjoys, he ends by making the inference that all his days goodness and mercy shall follow him. My Shepherd will be with me on earth, and take me at last to heaven. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

Ver. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.—*The green pastures*:—The image, so clear and beautiful in itself, is singularly forcible and suggestive in relation to our inner life. Is not the background of the picture true to the facts which we everywhere witness around us, and the needs and aspirations we have felt within us? How much there is in life to remind us of the long tracts of desert sand, the fierce and scorching rays of the sun, the lassitude and ennui of worn-out and wearied hearts. Without attempting to push the details of the imagery to excess, we may assert that the green pastures and still waters find their counterpart in the truths and doctrines of Scripture, in the ordinances of the Gospel, and the means of grace established for our sustenance and growth. For permanent comfort and strength we are dependent upon the revelations of the Divine Word. God Himself is the source of our satisfaction and peace. When our hearts, “ceasing from self,” can stay themselves upon Him, and find in their obedience to His will the great purpose, and in their consciousness of His approval the great reward, of their life; when, moreover, we can look forward to complete assimilation to, and eternal fellowship with, Him in heaven,—it is only then that we can realise the expressive image of the text, and “lie down in green pastures, and beside the still waters.” To these resting-places God leads us, even on earth. (*James Stuart.*) *The oases of life*:—These sentences do not describe the regular and uninterrupted experience of those who follow the Great Shepherd. They are by no means always reclining in green pastures, nor being conducted by the restful waters. Moreover, life after such a pattern would be entirely unsatisfactory and insufficient. Green pastures and still waters would prove an unspeakable curse if life contained nothing else for us. How soon we should grow weak and indolent and useless. The text refers to the occasional privilege rather than to the common experience of the sheep of His flock. David was passing through a time of sorrow, want, and wandering. And if the way of your life often seems to lie through the desert, you need not lose heart and hope. Following God’s guidance, you will not be denied needful refreshment and rest. God will bring you to the oasis where the quiet waters lie, and the grass is fresh and green. He will discover to you some peaceful hour, some shady nook, some prepared table, where the soul may be refreshed and renewed. It would be easy to enlarge upon the many privileged occasions which, in our wilderness life, answer to “green pastures and still waters.” Everything that brings relief from the ordinary pressure of daily life and revives the drooping spirits may be so regarded. Music, friendship, and religious privileges are as “still waters.” And it is hardly possible to overestimate the worth of a wisely spent summer holiday. As far as in us lies, and especially in opportunities afforded by the summer holiday, let us search out the green pastures and the still waters, and “reap the harvest of a quiet eye.” (*G. Edward Young.*) *Spiritual rest*:—Three things are needed ere sheep or human spirits can rest. I. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF SAFETY. Who can rest so long as eternal destinies lie uncertainly in the balance? Against this our Shepherd Jesus has provided. He has Himself met the great adversary of our souls, and has for ever broken his power. II. SUFFICIENCY OF FOOD. A hungry sheep will not lie down. The shepherd who can provide it with plenty of good pasturage will soon bring the most restless animal to lie contentedly. We can never rest so long as the hunger of the spirit is unappeased and its thirst unslaked. There is no answer to the unrest of the inward man until the voice of Jesus is heard saying, “He that cometh to Me shall never hunger.” The Word of God may be compared to green pastures. There are many spiritual realities corresponding to the waters of rest. III. OBEDIENCE TO THE SHEPHERD’S LEAD. The tenderest shepherd cannot bring the flock to rest unless they follow him. This test of following the Shepherd’s lead is most important. It is by no means wonderful that we lose our rest when we run hither and thither, following the devices and desires of our own hearts. We substitute our plans for His. We do not look up often enough to see which way He is going, and what He would have us do. And so our rest is broken. We must follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Green pastures*:—I. MAN’S WANT OF GREEN PASTURES. In this bustling world it is difficult to enjoy a pleasant repose. The hard-working servant of the community, whether it be by hands or by brain that he chiefly performs his part, is apt not only to feel a strong necessity for rest, but to pant and sigh for a

more retired and soothing kind of rest than his position often permits him to attain. II. THE DISCOVERY OF GREEN PASTURES. III. THE EXPERIENCE OF GREEN PASTURES. It is one thing to behold the picture of a rich and fertile pastureland; it is another thing to be in actual contact with richness and fertility in the locality of our dwelling-place. The Psalmist refers, not to one pasture only, but to pastures. The field of enjoyment to which Jesus introduces the once wandering soul is extensive. The provision of the field is various. When brought to be at peace with God, through the blood of the Cross, the soul is set in a large place. The power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Almighty have prepared innumerable sources of pleasure for His intelligent creatures. The treasures furnished by Divine loving-kindness are inexhaustible. IV. THE EXPECTATION OF GREEN PASTURES IN GREATER AND MORE ABUNDANT MEASURE. Experience of past love is the strongest foundation for the anticipation of future love. He that maketh me to lie down in green pastures is the very One from whose power I may hereafter expect a provision of green pastures in larger varieties and in greater richness. (*H. Wellwood Moncreiff, D.D.*) *The Guardian care of God:—*

I. DIVINE PROVISION FOR NEEDED REST. The picture presented is that of happy satisfaction and calm delight. Even for timid sheep all sense of danger is gone, and the whole aspect of the flock speaks of peace, quiet, repose. It tells of a soul in harmony with God, passion hushed, discord in the unruly will, and the struggle of sinful desire destroyed. II. DIVINE PROVISION FOR APPROPRIATE SUSTENANCE. "Pastures of grass, and waters of quietness." Supply not only sufficient, but suitable for the needs of the flock. It answers to the Gospel—the good tidings of God and from God, a proclamation of what God is, and how God feels towards us. Says George Eliot,—"The first condition of human goodness is something to love, the second, something to reverence." In the character of our Lord Jesus Christ we have that which inspires both love and reverence. III. DIVINE PROVISION FOR RENEWAL OF STRENGTH. Few creatures are more helpless than sheep. The thought of God as physician to His flock brings Him into most intimate and close relationship. IV. DIVINE PROVISION FOR ACTIVE SERVICE. He will lead, and it will always be in righteousness. No guarantee for character like that of God's leadings. Character is not predestinated. It is won by achievement, and it will be won if we follow where God leads. "For His name's sake"—that is the secret of all His kindness, and it is the secret of our consecration. (*George Bainton.*) *The green*

*pastures and still waters where the flock are fed:—*Here we have the ample supply of grace afforded to the believer in the new covenant, to meet all his spiritual wants. I. THE IDEA OF REST AND SECURITY. "Lie down." The pasture is indicative of perfect repose. The life of man is a constant striving after rest and satisfaction. True rest can be found in God alone. II. THE IDEA OF ABUNDANT PROVISION. It is not one piece of pasture-ground that is spoken of, but pastures. There is no scant supply. And what diversity there is in God's spiritual provision for His people! Grace for all times and every time. . . . "Still waters." These words convey, under another figure and symbol, a description of the same calm and hallowed repose, secured to the believer, which the Psalmist had in his mind in the preceding clause. This is an inland river, a quiet, gentle stream. Here, too, as in the former figure, we have the abundance of God's mercies set forth; not only varied pastures, but varied waters. We have streams of peace, of purity, of pardon, of sanctification,—all exceeding great and precious. Conclude with the reflection suggested by both clauses, that religion is happiness. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*) *Pastures that please as well as feed:—*Not only He hath green pastures to lead me into, which shows His ability, but He leads me into them, which shows His goodness. He leads me not into pastures that are withered and dry, that would distaste me before I taste them; but He leads me into green pastures, as well to please my eye with the verdure as my stomach with the herbage, and inviting me, as it were, to eat, by setting out the meat in the best colour. A meat though never so good, yet if it look not handsomely, it dulls the appetite; but when besides the goodness it hath also a good look, this gives the appetite another edge, and makes a joy before enjoying. But yet the goodness is not altogether in the greenness. Alas, green is but a colour, and colours are but deceitful things: they might be green leaves, or they might be green flags or rushes; and what good were to me in such a greenness? No, my soul, the goodness is in being green pastures, for now they perform as much as they promise; and as in being green they were a comfort to me as soon as I saw them, so in being green pastures they are a refreshing to me now as soon as I taste them. (*Sir Richard Baker.*) *Good pasturage:—*1. Here is



fulness (pastures and waters). Pastures alone are not enough for sheep, but they must have waters too. 2. Here is goodness. Though there be pastures, yet if they be not wholesome, the sheep are not fed, but destroyed by them. Not mere pastures, but green pastures; not mere waters, but still waters are provided here for David. 3. Here is well-pleasedness. I. THAT GOD DOTH PROVIDE ENOUGH, OR SUFFICIENTLY FOR HIS PEOPLE. II. THAT AS GOD PROVIDES A FULL ESTATE, SO THE BEST ESTATE FOR HIS FLOCK OR PEOPLE. Pastures which are green, and waters which are still. To omit many things there is a threefold estate of God's people: (1) Their spiritual estate; (2) their glorious estate; (3) their temporal estate. That the condition of the godly is much better than the men of this world do judge it. Godliness is no parched wilderness, no barren heath, nor like the mountains of Gilboa: it hath the greenest pastures, and the stillest waters. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Repose in life*:—I. Here is a promise, then, to the weary, of REPOSE. Thank God this is not an age of idleness. Can we equally say, thank God this is not an age of repose? It is almost the prevailing stamp which defines the character of the present day—its restlessness. Call it, if you will, impatience; call it hurry. Certainly, whatever is the opposite to repose. It is just the same wherever we look. Politics, religion, social movements, are all whirled along, catching up in their gusty flight whatever is on the surface, whatever is light and movable, one scheme sweeping on the dust of another, as if men had imbibed the creed which proclaims, "Whatever is, is wrong, and therefore the opposite to the present system, whatever is, is right." How much there is around us and about us to think of, if only we would be still! The world is eloquent with parables on every side; the walls of our daily environment are hung with pictures. The sower as he sows is also preaching; the lilies as they grow, the ravens as they fly,—all are our teachers. How much there is to observe, as naturalists alone will tell us, to our shame, if we are only patient and ready to watch! And, besides the pastures of our daily experience, there are the deep cool pastures of good books, with a ready supply for our need; above all, there is the Holy Spirit, ever shedding His freshening dew on the daily events of our common life. What can we expect, if we never meditate, if we never think, if we never read; if there is no repose and no green pasture, but only such hurried nibbling of roadside verbiage and well-worn platitudes as lie along the dusty track of our daily routine? If the pastures of God are green because they are fresh, they are also green because they are sheltered. Around them is the protecting hedge of God's Law. God's service is the service of perfect freedom, where to admit any taint of sinfulness is to admit weariness and distastefulness. Let us try, then, and gain some repose in the midst of this weary restlessness. Repose, if possible, in our methods; for God works slowly, and to work together with Him means to work slowly also. Let us gain repose in our daily spiritual life. Restlessness is at the bottom of many hasty actions, which end in flying in the face of God's good providence for us. The restlessness of unsettled belief, the restlessness of no belief, are the punishments which await the neglect of spiritual repose. These green pastures are no luxury of religion; they are a necessity of life. Each day must have its Nazareth of devotion, as life has its own Nazareth of subjection in childhood. II. Another note which rings out clearly in this verse, is PEACE. "He maketh me to lie down . . . He leadeth me." How sadly the soul needs peace—peace in His felt presence! The world is sown with trouble, but still "He maketh me to lie down . . . He leadeth me." Panting and affrighted, and doubtful of ourselves, He makes us lie down, He feeds us, He leads us on, where the temptation at one time had seemed likely to kill us. Peace rises out of their furious onslaught, or their petty annoyance. And yet how often little troubles seem to have power to vex and irritate us, even more than great ones!—such things as distraction, interruption, accident, disappointment; so many barriers put in our path to deflect us into duty, so many obstacles to provoke our peevish ill-will. Let us cheerfully recognise that, if the Good Shepherd is leading us, there is no such thing as accident. Trifles may very easily interfere with our peace of mind; but they may also be God's messengers to teach us to cast away all appearance of grumbling and fretfulness, and if an obstacle arise in our ministry, to recognise that it is of the Holy Ghost. III. And yet there is a third note which swells up in the triple harmony of this verse; and that is, COMFORT. "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart: Thy comforts have refreshed my soul." "The waters of quietness" have become in one version of the Psalm, which is very dear to us, "the waters of comfort." (*W. C. E. Newbolt, M.A.*) *He leadeth me beside the still waters.*—*Still waters*:—I. STILL WATERS ARE DISTASTEFUL TO THE WORLDLY SPIRIT. Men of the world seek for

novelty and excitement, but their pleasures dry up like a summer brook. The edge of appetite gets dulled, and he succeeds best who can give fresh keenness to the world's appetite. Still waters? No! These to worldly hearts would be misery. We can, however, often see behind all these brilliances of earth. Within, there is an aching, dying soul. II. STILL WATERS MAKE US HEAR THE VOICE OF OUR SAVIOUR. Sometimes silence itself is rest. III. STILL WATERS ARE NOT STAGNANT WATERS. They are deep, pure, living, flowing. The waters are living waters. True of the Bible. IV. STILL WATERS ARE IN THE KEEPING OF CHRIST. The Shepherd has beforehand surveyed the mountains and the plains. What road are we to take when there seems no path? Amid the broken *débris* of rocks the Shepherd leads the way. V. STILL WATERS ARE WITH US ALL THE JOURNEY THROUGH. "Beside" them. The path and the waters go together. We may miss some joys, they are temporary—suited to certain tastes and eras in our life. The curtain has fallen over them. Can that photograph represent your childhood? Can you ever live again as once you did? As the rivers from their simple fountain—along their broadening course—flow into the sea, so these other "waters" lead on to the great ocean of immortality. Listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd. Human hearts hungry for the sacrament of truth hear Him. By the still waters of meditation and Scripture and prayer, we make silence in our hearts for Him. (*W. M. Statham.*) *Beside the still waters*:—God's chosen ways of working in the physical world are not wholly of the sudden and violent sort. Storm and earthquake and flood have undoubtedly played their part; but God seems to work, by preference, slowly and in silence. The same is true in the moral world. It is indeed difficult to over-estimate the force of a great soul. It is well to remember that not all dislocating and disturbing spirits put forth any true claim to greatness. One indeed speaks what the many feel; but his word is with power because of the dumb aspirations stirring in many breasts, and a universal emotion which has not yet found expression. And this is even more the case with regard to moral operations of a quieter and less signal, though hardly less important kind; forces which do not so suddenly change the world, as keep it sweet and pure, and perhaps, in the course of ages, urge it a little nearer the throne of God. A father's integrity; a mother's sweet goodness; the quiet air of a happy home; a domestic courage and patience, at which you have looked very closely, and whose every line and lineament you know; some ancestral saintliness, which is a household tradition, and no more, but which has never withered in the fierce light of public estimate,—these things have inspired and nourished your nobler part. They are the refreshing dew and the fertilising rain, the restful night, and the kindling day of God's moral world. We insist too much on our own estimate of small and great in the moral world, forgetting that any single fact or individual life is but one link in an endless chain of causes and consequences, of which we ought to know the whole before we can rightly estimate a part. No mistake can be greater than to suppose that all the world's best work is done by the eloquent tongue and the busy hand. God Himself provides a diversity of work for His own purposes; but God tempers His weapons in His own way. (*C. Beard, B.A.*) *Still waters*:—You have, I daresay, often seen a stream rising up on the mountain side, amid rocks and ferns and twisted roots, and the short, sweet herbage of the hill. With many a playful plunge and headlong leap it finds its way to the valley, and as it pursues its course passes through various scenes. So flows our life. Now in sunshine, now in shadow, now torn by strife and doubt, and now reposing by the quiet waters of rest. The variety adds to our moral healthfulness and vigour. Few lives have been more varied than that of David. The extremity of danger and even the dread of death he knew, as well as the heights of success and the intoxicating sweets of power. In firm faith upon a Divine and unchanging love he had found the quietness and assurance of which he speaks. There are times when rest seems the one thing we most long for. As when—I. IN THE CONFLICT OF DOUBT. Faith is difficult in our day. There are two ways in which a man may seek rest—one by thorough examination of the ground of his faith; the other by trusting those feelings which carry us beyond reason; to faith which sees and hears God where reason cannot. II. UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN. This is a dread experience. But it would be good for many to know it who now lead a smooth and easy life, sailing merrily over sunny seas. There is much in the Bible to awaken such conviction of sin—the Divine wrath, the severity of Christ. It is when we see Christ as Saviour, we have rest. III. IN SUFFERING AND LOSS. But rest in God is possible. And this happy condition of mind is to be cultivated by meditation, worship, prayer, and

communion with God. (*P. W. Darnton, B.A.*) *Still waters*:—And now see the great goodness of this Shepherd, and what just cause there is to depend upon His providence; for He lets not His sheep want, but He leads them “beside still waters”; not waters that roar and make a noise enough to fright a fearful sheep, but waters still and quiet, that though they drink but little, yet they may drink that little without fear. (*Sir Richard Baker.*)

**Ver. 3. He restoreth my soul.**—*The restoration of the soul*:—1. It implies the quickening and invigoration of the soul in seasons of depression and exhaustion. A sheep may languish from internal weakness and disorder, and may need the application of medicinal restorations. So the soul may suffer from its inherent liabilities to weakness and weariness, and mistrust of God, and from its inability to rest calmly and in good faith upon the precious promises of His Word. At such times, He who has hitherto sustained us will act as a wise and good physician, and restore us to health and vigour. 2. The distemper of which we complain is in truth a form of sin, and has its source in a declining faith, and in a relaxed hold on God. The main feature of the restoration implies the wandering of the sheep from the pasture and the fold. Thank God there has been revealed to us a love which is not measured by our merits, and which our needs cannot exhaust; a love which bears with us tenderly and patiently in the midst of all unfaithfulness; a love stronger than death—many waters cannot quench it. In our wildest and most distant wanderings the eye of God wistfully follows our course, nor will He suffer our disloyalty and ingratitude to baffle His purpose of mercy, or sunder the ties that bind us to Him. (*James Stuart.*) *Happy restoration*:—Restoration, like conversion, is the work of God. Who can convert a sinner? God only. Who can restore a backslider? The Almighty alone. I. THE MEANS GOD EMPLOYS TO BRING THE BACKSLIDER TO REPENTANCE. Any one who has tried to deal with a backslider knows how difficult it is. 1. He uses memory (*Matt. xxvi. 75*); of warnings; of promises. 2. He reveals Himself as unchangeable. 3. Makes known His faithfulness. 4. His tenderness (*John vi. 37*). II. THE WAY OF RETURN. 1. It is a way of humility. 2. Of prayer. 3. Of distinct renunciation of evil. 4. The return must be whole-hearted and unreserved. I would say, however, do not try to work yourself into a certain state of feeling, or, as an old writer has said, “Do not go on spinning repentance, as it were, out of your own bowels, bringing it with you to Christ, instead of coming to Him by faith to receive it from Him.” Of the exact nature of your feelings you never can be a proper judge. But this I would urge, look your sin steadily in the face; judge it as in the presence of God; consider it in the light of His warnings and promises, His exhibition of Himself, and His former dealings with you. Ask that you may see it as He sees it, and in all self-loathing and self-renunciation cast yourself afresh at the feet of Jesus. III. THE JOYOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE RESTORED. Pardon is enjoyed. Life realised. Peace. Zeal and rest in work. And all heightened by contrast. (*W. P. Lockhart.*) *Restoring the soul*:—The soul is the chief part of man; it is the offspring of God. All that relates to it must therefore be full of interest. I. A PAINFUL FACT IMPLIED. The soul may wander. All have done so, but even the converted may wander, foolishly, perilously, without power to return,—and all this through sin. II. A PLEASING TRUTH EXPRESSED. “He restoreth,” &c. We cannot do this of ourselves. The Lord restoreth—to real safety, to prosperity and enjoyment. He does this by various means—by affliction, by mercies heaped upon us; by His Word; through the ministry of the Gospel, and chiefly by the power of the Holy Spirit. In all this He displays wisdom, power, compassion. III. THE OBLIGATIONS WHICH RESULT. Penitence, gratitude, watchfulness, dependence. You who are strangers to this restoring grace, take heed, think, pray, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (*T. Kidd.*) *The soul restorer*:—I. WHAT ARE THE SEVERAL METHODS OR WAYS WHEREIN THE SOUL OF A CONVERTED CHRISTIAN MAY BE OPPRESSED AND MADE TO DROOP OR LANGUISH? 1. Conscientious apprehensions of sinful guilt. 2. Insolent operation of sinful principles. 3. Incessant assaults of temptation. 4. Ample and more permanent deserts. 5. Near and strong afflictions. II. HOW DOETH GOD REFRESH AND BEAR UP COMFORTABLY THE SOUL THAT LANGUISHETH UNDER ANY OF THOSE KINDS OF OPPRESSIONS? 1. By His Word. This was that which quickened David in his afflictions, and kept him from fainting (*Psa. xix. 7*). 2. By His Spirit. Who is therefore styled the Comforter, because He doth restore joy and cheerfulness. 3. By faith. This is the great restorer of life to any oppressed Christian. III. WHY DOETH THE LORD RESTORE LIFE, AS IT WERE, AND COMFORT



UNTO THE SOULS OF HIS PEOPLE? 1. Necessity on their part. Sense of sin is a heavy thing. 2. Goodness of compassion on God's part. 3. Fidelity and truth in God. 4. His affections are much towards oppressed, and distressed, and languishing souls. Consider a few particulars. 1. Soul oppressions are very painful. The soul is the seat of sweetest comfort or deepest sadness. A little thing in the eye will trouble, and a small thing on the brain is weighty, and any burden on the soul is very heavy. 2. Soul sinkings are very prejudicial. 3. The Lord only hath power over the soul, and the burdens of it. We can mar, and we can trouble our own souls and cast them down, but it is no power and art but that of a God which can raise up, revive, and settle the soul again. The air may be good to refresh some bodies, and merry company to hearten a melancholic body; for sinking bodies, physic, diet, recreation, &c., may be good restoratives; but for souls that are sinking, or sunk, no helps can restore them but such as are like themselves. Spiritual souls, spiritual maladies, are to be raised up with spiritual restoratives only. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*)

*Soul restoration*:—"He restoreth my soul." That is just what the sinner needs. It is idle to talk about Christian culture, or Christian growth in any way, until the soul is restored again from sin. Before you can expect your plant to grow you must plant it out; before you can expect the sheep to be led in green pastures, and by still waters, and protected from enemies, it must be brought back from its wandering. He wants to bring you back to your lost goodness; your lost innocence; your lost relation to God, when you could pray to Him as naturally as you could talk to your mother; your lost peace of heart; your lost tenderness of conscience; your lost love for good things; your lost sense of safety; your lost hope of heaven and eternal life. (*A. L. Banks, D.D.*)

*The great Restorer*:—I. GOD WILL PRESERVE THE GRACE THAT IS IN HIS PEOPLE. The new nature in the believer is the workmanship of God; he hath a new nature. There is in that new nature that which is like God's nature, that which is some reflection of God. There is not a single grace of the believer but what shows forth some of the attributes there are in God. In order to keep His people God puts them into the hands of His Son. Jesus said, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." What an infinite suitableness and propriety there is in Jesus to restore. Look at His name—Jesus. It supposes a restorer. As God He is omnipotent; as man He has infinite sympathy. II. THE SORT OF RESTORATION. Many a man has shed tears for sin who has never come to a knowledge of its true evil. There is a sorrow which does not work death, a godly sorrow. It is oftentimes difficult to tread the maze in the labyrinth of our hearts about repentance. I think of those who have no one with them when they fall; they are alone. It is an awful thing to be alone with God. The subject, however, has a sweet aspect to God's tried and tempted children. If through depravity and strong inward corruptions we are led into sin, let our motto be, "Quick restorings": no delay; no spirit of self-dependence; seek restoration in true repentance. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*)

*Revival*:—The Psalmist describes the revival which in the periods of spiritual languor and decline he derived from the care of the Lord his Shepherd. I. THE CARE WHICH THE GREAT SHEPHERD TAKES TO RECLAIM HIS PEOPLE. From the erroneous and sinful courses into which they do but too often allow themselves to be betrayed. Even the renewed man is not in this world so thoroughly established in holiness as to be beyond the possibility of sinning, beyond the reach of temptation, beyond the assaults of spiritual danger. But even when astray, He will in His wisdom and love seek them out and bring them back to Himself. II. THE RECOVERY OF THE SOUL FROM LANGUOR AND DESPAIR. Often David had felt his soul when it was, as it were, overwhelmed with anguish and despondency, refreshed and revived by the assurances of the Good Shepherd's love, by the experience of the Good Shepherd's soothing care. David's experience is that, more or less, of every Christian soul.

III. THE DESIGN OF THIS COMFORT. It is that the Shepherd may lead the soul "in the paths of righteousness." In the Word of God the Psalmist recognises the only absolute and infallible rule, whether of belief or duty. And it is as copious and complete as it is accurate and sure. (*T. B. Patterson, M.A.*)

*My Restorer*:—This sweetest of the Psalms sings of many mercies which the believer receives, and traces them all to one source—the Good Shepherd Himself. Text reminds us—

I. OF OUR TRUE POSITION. It is that of a sheep abiding close to its shepherd. Now this should be ours because of—1. Our obligations to Christ. 2. Our relationships to Him. 3. If we would have happiness. 4. Our daily necessities. 5. Our infinite perils. 6. The benefits of fellowship. II. OF OUR FREQUENT SIN. "He restoreth my soul"—He often does it; He is doing it now. With many suspended communion is chronic. This most wrong. And where it is not so bad as this,

there are sad seasons of declension. They are brought about by worldly conformity, forgetfulness of duty. Jesus is a jealous lover. III. OF OUR LORD'S FAITHFUL LOVE. He will never give up His sheep. For His name's sake. He will use all manner of means. IV. OF HIS SUPREME POWER. It is He who does this. It was He who began the work of grace in you, and therefore He will restore. No outward temptation has force when Christ is present. His presence is the death of every sin, the life of every grace. I see the green leaves of a plant most dear to all who love the woods in spring. It is seen nestling under a hedge under a shelving bank, just above a trickling stream. I ask it why it does not bloom, and it whispers to me that it will bloom by and by. "But, sweet primrose, why not put forth thy lovely flower at once, and gladden us with thy beauty?" She answers, "I am waiting for him—for my lord, the sun; when he cometh and putteth forth his strength I shall put on my beauty." "But wilt thou not need soft pearly drops of dew to glisten on thy leaves, and the violet and the harebell to keep thee company, and the birds to sing to thee?" To which she replies, "He will bring them, he will bring them all." "But art thou not afraid of the frost and the dreary snow-storms?" "He will chase them all away; I shall be safe enough when he comes." Now, we are the plant and Jesus is our sun. And He restores us entirely, and now. Come to Christ direct, not round by Sinai. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The Shepherd of the lost sheep*:—If He has appealed to my love as the Good Shepherd of the green pastures, even more does He claim my adoration, my reverence, my heart, as the Shepherd of the lost and straying sheep. I. THERE IS NO DISGUIISING THE FACT, HIDE IT AS WE WILL, OF OUR FREQUENT FALLING AWAY. Be it the weakness of our human nature, ever prone to evil; be it the corrupted atmosphere in which we live, the swampy marsh of the world, from which rises up, in stealthy, deadly fumes, the vapour of bad public opinion, which we call the world, where the mosses are brightest, and the flowers the fairest, and the sunbeams dance the merriest; be it Satan, above all, with his terrible power of trickery and deceit;—whatever it may be, try as hard as we may, we have to reckon with a constant deflection from a high ideal. And all along the course of our life, His efforts to restore us, to help us to persevere, are spread out. Think only of the many new beginnings which He offers to us. The oft-recurring strength of our Communion, the storehouse of Sundays, the manifold means of grace which surround our path, are well known to us. But think, also, of such things as the disposition of day and night, the necessity of sleep, and the like: these are all merciful new beginnings which offer us occasions for fresh efforts after amendment. It is so with the Church's seasons, with the great round of fast and festival, each with a fresh aspect of Divine grace, each with a fresh hope of a better life. II. And being restored, once more THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS LAY OPEN BEFORE US—the paths which come from righteousness, which end in righteousness, and are righteousness. Certainly we ought to strive for a more harmonious life of goodness. Our lives are too often sharply divided up, as you might divide a concert, into sacred and secular. Most certainly we should all strive to live by rule. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of rule. Rule makes us like Jesus Christ, to whom every action apparently had its hour, and whose whole life was a fulfilment of minute prophecy. Rule, once more, helps us to utilise life. It is the scaffolding from which all the materials which daily life brings us can be placed upon the wall. The paths of righteousness, the very highest paths, are open to us; our very sins may be stepping-stones to higher things, and produce, if not humility, at least watchfulness. Christ will bring out character, if only we do not hinder Him, until it becomes established in righteousness. III. AND THIS WILL HE DO "FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE." "The revealed name, which gathers up and expresses for man just so much as he can apprehend of the Divine nature." His name is Jesus. As great conquerors are named after their victories, so He is named from His. "He shall save"; "able to save"; "mighty to save." Through Jesus is the way to escape. This, perhaps, is Satan's chief terror which he holds over us—the impossibility of escape. His name is Emmanuel, "God with us": with us, in every stage of our life; with us, when we broke away; with us, when we came back; with us, as we are gaining strength. His name is the Christ, the Prophet who warns me, the Priest who atones for me, the King who rules me. So He restoreth my soul; so He leads me in the paths of righteousness; so He pledges to me the assurance of His holy name. (W. C. E. Newbolt, M.A.) He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.—*Guidance in the right path*:—There is a well-known similitude which represents human nature as a chariot driven by two horses, one of

them high-spirited and aspiring, the other, heavy, tame, and grovelling; and the charioteer unable to exercise over either of them absolute control, yields first to the one and then to the other, so that the chariot is not carried along a straight, continuous path, with uniform progress towards its goal, but frequently turns aside and stands still. The image is in itself so striking, and so true to experience, that it needs no explanation. There is in all men a higher and lower nature, which are utterly at variance, one drawing us toward good, the other drawing us toward evil; one having its source in the spirit, the other in the flesh. And hence there is within us a more or less perpetual conflict; and even when we have been awakened to the realities of the spiritual world, and have felt the attractions of the Divine life, our difficulties have not ceased. In addition to accurate knowledge of the right, we need a motive power which will ensure obedience to its claims, transform our intellectual perception into spiritual deeds, and harmonise all the powers of the soul in the presence of the highest light. And such an efficient of morality is suggested to us by the words of the text, "He leadeth me." Referring to the custom of the Eastern shepherds—going before their sheep. So God guides us. We enter the paths of righteousness, not because we are driven into them, not because we are subjected to some irresistible force, but by the attraction of our Lord's loving presence, and the persuasive power of His holy will. The Bible, valuable as it is, is not the only means of God's guidance. In some conditions of mind the wisest words of themselves cannot suffice us. Apart from the living will of which they are an expression, they are poor and inefficient, and our hearts can be reached only as we see the Father. But the great principles of religion are presented to us not as dry and formal statements, as mere axioms and rules, but are clothed with flesh and blood, and embodied in a perfect life. He leadeth in the paths of righteousness, and thus gives us the encouragement of His own perfect example. Christ trod before us every step of the way which He wishes us to tread. It is wonderful to see how there is in Christ a manifestation of every virtue we have to acquire. "He leadeth," and therefore He draws us after Him by gentle and gradual guidance, in which He graciously accommodates Himself to the measure of our strength. Then the motive power of our life must be found in our love to the Great Shepherd of our souls. He goes before us that He may win our affections and draw us after Him. The value of the Divine guidance is enhanced by the ground on which it is seen to rest, the reason for which it is given—"For His name's sake." The name of God is symbolic of His nature. Probably the Psalmist's main idea is that God will lead us in the paths of righteousness, not because He is urged by considerations external to Himself, but as prompted by, and in order to honour the wisdom, the love, and the power which constitute His nature. If the name which David has especially in view be that of the Good Shepherd, God will do for men all that that term implies—He will not deny Himself. (*James Stuart.*) *God's guidance* :—How much would be gained, and how much would be lost, if we came to the conclusion that this Psalm was not written by David? A great deal would certainly be lost. For David is a man whose character and experience have an enduring moral and religious interest; everything that throws light on his sorrows and joys, his faith, his fears, his sins, and his repentance, is of great value; and his Psalm contains a very striking illustration of the depth and strength of his personal trust in God. It helps to make one part of David's life real and vivid to us. Something perhaps would be gained. If it was written by some obscure saint this might seem to draw the Psalm nearer to some of us, and to give us a stronger claim to all its disclosures concerning the blessedness of a life in God's keeping. David was an exceptional man; what applies to him may not apply to us. Whoever was the author, the Psalm was written more than two thousand years ago, and but for our familiarity with it, its very antiquity would interest and move us, as we are interested and moved by an ornament that belonged to a Greek who lived under the Ptolemies, or to an Egyptian who worshipped in the temple of Carnac, in the time of its glory. But the Psalm has another and pathetic interest. This Psalm has been in daily use for more than two thousand years. It has become the expression of the experience, not of a solitary saint, but of a countless multitude of saints. The Psalmist says that he belongs to a flock of which the Living and Eternal God is the Shepherd. All that a good Eastern shepherd is to his flock when he is guiding them from pasture to pasture and stream to stream, God will be to us. It is very easy to lose our way in life, and very hard to find it again. Without any evil intention, we form habits of living which are sometimes injurious to a noble morality, and are still more often fatal to an earnest loyalty to God. When a man learns that he



has gone wrong, he should appeal at once to the pity of the Good Shepherd, who goes after the lost sheep till He finds it. It is easy to lose our way when we are not looking to Him to guide us; it is impossible without His guidance to find it again. The better thing is not to lose it. The really devout man has submitted himself to the authority of God, has committed himself to the love of God, and may rely confidently on the guidance of God. It was not the truth alone that the Psalmist relied upon to guide him, but God Himself, the loving God. Religion is a right relation, not between man and truth, not between man and law, but between living person and living person—between man and God. The Psalmist had consented to follow God's guidance, and he was relying on God to guide him in "the paths of righteousness." Those words, however, do not precisely convey the Psalmist's meaning. He says that God will guide His flocks in the "right paths," the "direct paths," to their water and their pasture. And only righteous paths can bring us to where God desires us to come. The Psalmist means that if a man is under God's guidance he will be protected from making a wrong decision in critical moments; he will not take the wrong path. God's guidance keeps a man from sin; but it also keeps him from wasting his strength and failing to make the most of all his powers and opportunities. In all projects for doing service to mankind, a devout man may trust God to guide him in right paths. We may miss our way in the service we endeavour to render to others, as well as in the ordering of our personal life, because we lean too much on our own understanding, instead of trusting in the Lord with all our heart, acknowledging Him in all our ways, and looking to Him to guide us in right paths. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*)

*The Divine leadings:—*I. SOME OF THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD LEADS US. That is, by which He prompts us to, guides and encourages us in, a good and righteous conduct. 1. God hath implanted many principles in our nature which prompt and incline us to a righteous conduct. These may be more powerful and more obvious in some than in others; but in some degree they exist in all; nor can they be referred but to an intelligent cause. All that is good in us comes from God. If there are found in the soul of man certain feelings and propensities, certain desires and affections, which incline him to a good and righteous conduct, let us give glory to God, and in all these acknowledge His hand leading us in His righteous paths. Feelings of sympathy and commiseration are general and powerful principles in the heart of man. There are not many who can witness severe distress unmoved. The principle of conscience is a powerful principle operating to the same end. It will rarely fail to point to the righteous path; it will plead with us to adopt it; it will remonstrate against deserting it; it will applaud us when forming the resolution to persevere in it. The desire of honest fame which men so generally feel; the dread of the disgrace which they know follows the discovery of an unworthy deed; the pleasure felt upon hearing of a generous act; the indignation, the honest indignation, which arises when we are told of flagrant injustice or merciless oppression,—are further instances of strong internal feelings all favourable to a righteous life. But God can work by any means and suit His dealings to any character. 2. By events which take place in the course of His providence, God urges us to a good and righteous conduct. To a person of a serious and well-constituted mind, the most familiar objects, and the most common events will convey instruction. If there are those who are insensible to the ordinary benignity of the ordinary operations of Providence, there are few who will not be impressed by more affecting events which at times occur. 3. From the Divine communications which God hath been pleased to make to us, we learn yet other means which He employs to guide, to animate, to support us in the paths of righteousness. II. ACKNOWLEDGE OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD, FOR EMPLOYING SO POWERFUL MEANS FOR SO GRACIOUS AN END. The paths of righteousness are the only paths of peace. In the paths of righteousness one may find difficulties, and may be called to some painful efforts, but they lead to certain and everlasting bliss. Can we be blind to the great criminality of our conduct if we resist these means which God employs to urge us to a good and righteous life? Let us wisely improve what God hath done for us. When He is employing these varied means to "lead us in the paths of righteousness," it is that He may conduct you to the mansions of bliss, and that you may dwell in His house for evermore. (*Robert Bogg, D.D.*)

*God leading His people:—*I. THAT EVEN CONVERTED PERSONS NEED A GOD TO LEAD THEM. O Lord, saith the Prophet (Jer. x. 23), I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. And therefore David prays, (Psa. cxliii. 10) Teach me to do Thy will. What the leading of God is which is here meant. 1. There is a double leading. One is general in a way of common providence. Another is special and proper to the state and acts,

and ways of grace and salvation, whereto a more singular aid and influence is necessary. 2. This efficacious guidance or leading consists of these particulars. (1) Of a clearer illumination. They have eyes given them to see their Leader, and ears given them to know their Leader and His voice: This is the way, walk in it (Isa. xxx. 21). Show me Thy ways, O Lord, teach me Thy paths (Psa. xxv. 4). (2) Of a peculiar inclination of the will or heart to obey and follow the direction of God, which some do call exciting grace. (3) Of a special co-operation, wherein Divine assistance concurs with the will renewed and excited, enabling it both to will and to do those things which are pleasing unto God, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do. (4) Lastly, of a singular confirmation, which some call sustaining grace. II. THIS FOR THE NATURE OF THIS GUIDANCE, NOW FOR THE MANNER OF IT. It is delightful as well as gentle. It is a safe leading. It is a faithful leading. Such a leading as will not mislead us. Such a leading as will not fail us. III. BUT WHY SHOULD CONVERTED PERSONS NEED THE LEADING OF GOD? 1. In respect of the imbecility that is in their graces. Grace (considered in this life) though it be a sweet plant, yet it is but a plant very tender; and though it be a pleasing child, yet but a child very weak. 2. In respect of the difficulties which are in the way. Though righteous paths be heavenly and holy, yet many times are they made stormy and uneasy. 3. In respect of that erroneous aptness in us, even the best of us; error is manifold, and truth simple; many ways to miss the mark, one only to hit it. 4. Christians must make progress in grace, as well as find an entrance of grace. 5. Lastly, in respect of that backwardness that is in our spirits: The flesh is weak, saith Christ. The journey to heaven is up the hill, we fail against wind and tide. The first use shall be to inform us of the great love of God towards His people, whom He is pleased not to leave, but to guide and lead, to make and keep, to raise up and lead. It may likewise inform us, that we have no cause to glory in our own strength. IV. IT WILL PROVE OUR BEST COMFORT, HAVING SUCH A LEADER TO FOLLOW HIM. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*)

**In the paths of righteousness.**—*Right paths*:—I. THE PATHS. The Lord can lead us in no other paths than such as He walks in Himself. The paths of creation are all right paths. There is nothing crooked, perverse, or capricious in the laws of nature. The paths of Providence in which God walks before us are paths of righteousness. People never question it when He goes before them in the glow of sunshine, dropping rich bounties every step He takes. But when the Lord walks before us covered with clouds, and a rod in His hand, how common then to talk of “mystery.” In whatever way the Lord is going before you now, the way is not only a right one because it is expedient for your good, and will yield you benefit at last; but it is absolutely, constantly, and without exception, a righteous one. The paths of duty, too, in which God would have us walk before Him are paths of righteousness. They are perfectly straight. The paths of Christian faith, and obedience, and self-denial, and purity, and truth, and honesty, and love, are all straight. They run parallel with the laws of the whole outer universe. They run parallel with the laws of our own being. They run parallel with the interests of the eternal future. Sin runs across those interests. II. THE GUIDANCE. It is Divine. He, the covenant-keeping God, leadeth me. His character is a pledge that He will lead me right. It is individual. “He leadeth me.” He leadeth and we are led. How many thoughts this suggests. 1. How manifold are the methods of His leading! 2. How mysterious is the innermost secret of His leading! (*John Stoughton, D.D.*)

*The paths of righteousness*:—There is a world of comfort contained in the simple words, “He leadeth me.” There is a Divine hand and purpose in all that befalls us. He leads in righteousness. He has an infinite reason for all He does. It is not for us to attempt to unravel the tangled thread of Providence. What a grandeur and dignity, what a safety and security it would give to life, if we sought ever to regard it as a leading of the Shepherd,—God shaping our purposes and destinies, that wherever we go, or wherever our friends go, He is with us. Let us learn the lesson of our entire dependence on our Shepherd Leader, and our need of His grace in prosecuting the path of our spiritual life. Be it ours to follow after that holiness, that righteousness, without which no man can see the Lord. (*J. R. Macduff, D.D.*)

*Right paths*:—It is noted as a further mark of our Shepherd’s care that He leads us in the paths of a good and right way. What these paths are, a study of the context will enable us with little difficulty to decide. They are spoken of in conjunction with the restoration of the soul, and refer to the guidance which completes and crowns it. Our revived life is directed in a worthy course, and we are prevented from further wanderings and transgressions. God directs us into right paths, as opposed to such as are crooked, uneven, and deceptive—paths

which lead directly to the goal which, as reasonable, responsible men, we ought to reach, and which, indeed, we must reach for the completion of our life's work and the satisfaction of our nature. The standard to which we are bound to conform is righteousness. We must live in rectitude and integrity of character. There is one course open to us. We must act up to the light that is in us, be conscientiously faithful to our conceptions of right, and submit with all loyalty of heart to the decisions of our judgment and conscience. (*James Stuart.*)

*Paths of righteousness*:—I. WHAT THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE. A path is nothing else but an open and beaten way or tract to walk in. There are two sorts of paths wherein men may be said to walk. Some are called erroneous and false ways; the Scriptures sometimes call these crooked paths, because they do not lead us directly to heaven, but wind off. Sometimes our own paths, because they are not ways of God's institution, but of our own invention. Sometimes paths not cast up (Jer. xviii. 15), in opposition to ancient and established and perused ways prescribed by God, and insisted in by the old faithful servants of God. These paths are those of infidelity and impenitency and impiety. In this place they are called paths of righteousness, which again are twofold, either—1. Doctrinal, in which respect the precepts of God are called the paths of righteousness, a rule to a man in his journey, and that, if which he will still follow, will assuredly bring him to his journey's end; so the precepts of God are the rules of our lives, according to which, if we do square them, everlasting life would be the end of that journey. 2. Or practical, and this path of the righteous is that which the Scripture calls the path of the just, or the way of good men (Isa. xxvi. 7), and the paths of uprightness (Prov. ii. 13). And they are called paths in the plural number, not for diversity, but for number, and some of them respect—(1) God; (2) Man. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*)

*Righteous ways*:—The ordering of our hearts and lives according to the right line or rule which is God's Word; a course, not an act.

II. WHAT IS IT TO BE LED IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS? And they are called righteous paths—1. Because the righteous God prescribes them. 2. Because the righteous person only walks in them. 3. Because they are the ways which are the right and only ways to lead us to our journey's end.

III. BUT WHY DOETH THE LORD PROFOUND RIGHTEOUS PATHS TO HIS SERVANTS, AND CAUSE THEM TO WALK IN THEM? 1. Because they are paths and ways suitable to His own nature. Every leader hath ways suitable to his own nature: the devil leads in ways like himself, sinful, unclean, &c. And God leads in ways suitable to Him; He is an holy God, and therefore leads in holy ways; a righteous God, and therefore leads His people in righteous paths. 2. Righteous paths are the best paths. God is the best God, His people are the best people, and righteous paths are the best paths. Best in many respects—(1) No paths so holy and clean. (2) Nor so safe. The way of the wicked seduceth them (Prov. xii. 26). Nothing exposeth us to more hazard than a sinful way; false ways are always unsure, many snares and dangers. (3) Nor so pleasant. On a good way, a man hath the company of a good God, and the peace of good conscience. (4) Nor so honourable. Wicked ways are ever most shameful.

IV. RIGHTEOUS WAYS ARE THE RIGHT WAY TO HEAVEN. God will lead His people in such ways wherein—1. He may receive glory from them. 2. They may receive glory from Him. Their graces would never be exercised, nor sins subdued, were not the paths righteous, &c. For what is the exercise of grace, but a motion in a righteous path, graces breaking out, working, walking, if grace were only bestowed for our conversion, and not for our conversation? Consider—1. There are divers paths and ways that men may walk in besides the paths of righteousness. 2. Though every man hath a path to walk in, yet naturally the way of righteousness we do not know. 3. Of all paths to walk in, our hearts are most averse to these. 4. What avails it though paths of righteousness be propounded unto you, and that you do know them, if all this while you are not led in those paths of righteousness? The properties of righteous paths are these—(1) They are supernatural. (2) They are difficult. It is more difficult to creep in a righteous path than to run in a wicked way. (3) They are holy. (4) They are straight, and not winding and crooked. One is a rectitude of conformity. Another is a rectitude of tendency. (5) They are solitary. The qualifications of those persons who do or can walk in paths of righteousness. As affection is a property of these righteous walkers, so likewise is subjection. Circumspection is another property. Perfection. What a man must do, so that he may come to walk in paths of righteousness? He must get such a light of understanding which must clear his mind of (1) extreme vanity, and (2) of unjust prejudices. There must be resolution and courage. 1. Walk in these paths dili-



gently. 2. Uniformly. Haltings and excursions, tripping in the way, or starting out of the way, are both opposite to a righteous walking. 3. Answerably. Not only to his profession, that his conversation be copied out of it, but also to his means and long standing. 4. Progressively. 5. Undauntedly. (*Ibid.*) For His name's sake.—*The Divine name a plea*:—But why is it that this great Shepherd will do these great things for me? Is it because He finds me to be a sounder sheep and to have fewer blemishes upon me than some other? Alas, no; for I am nothing but blemishes and unsoundness all over; but He will do it for His name's sake; for seeing He hath taken upon Him the name of a Good Shepherd, He will discharge His part, whatever His sheep be. (*Sir R. Baker.*)

Ver. 4. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.—*Valleys of the shadow*:—The royal poet is putting a spiritual meaning into the various experiences of his shepherd's life; and as he once led his flock to the green pastures and by the still waters, so he ascribes whatever of peaceful happiness his own life had known, to the kindly guidance of God. To-day let us give David's metaphor a practical application to our own character and fate. No man knows what is the real meaning and worth of life till he has consciously passed through the valley of the shadow of death. All healthy life is at the beginning unconscious. The analogy of the body helps us to understand this. A happy child lives without at all thinking of life—what it is, when it begins, how it must end. One can conceive of such a life as this prolonged through manhood and old age; but there would be something less than human in its unconsciousness. And there are lives, far more frequent, which are unconscious in another way, because to-day they eat and drink, and to-morrow die, and never know that there is anything more in existence than this; which are below the consciousness of sin, and never rise to a knowledge of their own wretchedness. So much is common to these two kinds of unconsciousness, that they can only be startled out of themselves by a touch of pain. The consciousness of sin can alone reveal the infiniteness of duty, the pangs of sorrow make plain the depth and compass of life. But no one of us ever goes down into the valley of the shadow of death of his own accord. We are willing to live the unconscious life if we can. We know the depths that lie below, but none the less rejoice to skim lightly over the surface. By and by God comes, and with His own Fatherly hand He leads us into the gloom, and leaves us there awhile alone. There is not one of us who would not rejoice in life-long exemption from bitter bereavement, who would not, if he could, choose this form of blessing almost before any other. And yet it is far better that God's visitation should come this way than not at all. If the soul has in it a certain capacity of education into the likeness of God, and can acquire a strength and a sweetness that were not in it at the first; if, moreover, this growth into a finer force, and symmetry is to be manifested upon a larger than any earthly scale,—then these blows of fate are not mere subtractions from the sum of happiness, and therefore to be wholly deprecated, but stages of discipline, states of training to be accepted, when they come, as part of the tuition of life. There are troubles and distresses the characteristic of which is to recall us to God from the mere external shows and shadows of life, and so out of seeming darkness to bring us into real light. But sometimes a darkness falls upon us which will not lift, and whose peculiar horror it is to rob us of the belief that there is any light at all. It may be the result of misfortune; it may come from reasoning overmuch; it may be the dizziness of the imagination. Every day men go down into this darkness, not knowing it, and able, almost content, to live in it. Can anything be so truly pitiable as to be altogether without life's divineness, as never to know the desire which transcends all others, as to be wholly unconscious of the satisfaction which, once felt, is recognised as including all strength and all happiness? It would not be good for us never to go down into the valley of the shadow of death until we were called upon to make the inevitable transit from this life to another. Until we are shaken out of our moral unconsciousness by some great shock and conflict of the spirit we cannot tell what nobleness of strength, what debasement of weakness, lie concealed within us. Our faith is never firmly rooted in our hearts till we have looked out upon life and faced what it would be without faith. We never know what God is, and may be, to our spirits till we have gone down with Him into the valley of the shadow, and there in the thick darkness felt the stay of His presence and the comfort of His love. (*C. Beard, B.A.*) *Fearless in dangers*:—I. THAT GREAT CALAMITIES, AND TERRIBLE DANGERS, EVEN THE SHADOWS OF DEATH MAY BEFALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD. For the understanding

of this assertion premise these particulars, namely, that there are several shadows of death, or terrible dangers; some are—1. Natural: as grievous diseases and sicknesses, which do even close up the day of life. 2. Malicious: which arise from Satan and from evil men, his instruments. 3. Spiritual: these dangers of all others are the most sore. These shadows of death, or great and near dangers, do cause them to shake off their great security. When a storm ariseth it is time for the mariner to awake and look to his tackling, and when the city is beleaguered it will make every man to stand to his arms. Standing waters gather mud, and disused weapons rust. They do demonstrate the solidity and validity of true grace. They increase the spirit of prayer more. They do dissolve and loosen the affections more from the world. Shadows of death make us better to discern the shadows of life, the poor empty vanities of the world, and set the heart more on heavenly purchases. II. THAT RIGHTEOUS PERSONS ARE FEARLESS EVEN UNDER THE SHADOWS OF DEATH. And the reasons or causes of this fearlessness of man, or dangers by man, are these—(1) God hath wrought in them a true fear of Himself; He hath put His fear into their hearts (Jer. xxxii. 40). Now, the true fear of God purgeth or casteth out all vain fear of men. (2) They know that the originals of fear are not in the creatures. Men are afraid of men because they take them to be more than men. (3) They are in covenant with God, and God with them, therefore they fear no evil. (4) They have much clearness in conscience; and integrity in conscience breeds audacity in conscience. (5) They have faith in them, and can live by faith. The just shall live by his faith (Heb. ii. 3). (6) Lastly, they may be fearless notwithstanding all dangers, forasmuch as those dangers shall never do them hurt, but good. And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? (1 Pet. iii. 13.) III. THAT GOD IS PRESENT WITH HIS PEOPLE IN ALL THEIR DANGERS AND TROUBLES, AND THAT PRESENCE OF HIS IS THE GROUND OF THEIR CONFIDENCE. (1) That God is present with His in all their dangers. (2) Divine presence is the ground of Christian confidence. Some distinguish thus; there is a fourfold presence of God—(1) One is natural. And thus is He present with all creatures. Whither shall I flee from Thy presence (Psa. cxxxix. 7). (2) A second is majestic. And thus is He said to be present in heaven; and we pray to Him as our Father which is in heaven. (3) A third is His judicial presence. And thus is He present with ungodly men. (4) A fourth is His gracious or favourable presence. Consider the qualities of His presence with you, and it may yield you singular comfort and support. (1) It is the presence of a loving God. (2) It is the presence of an Almighty God. (3) It is the presence of an active God. At such times you will certainly need the presence of God. Our affections are apt to be most impatient. Our fears are apt to be most violent. Our unbeliefs are apt to be most turbulent. Our consciences are apt to be most unquiet. And Satan is most ready to fish in troubled waters. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Light in a darkened way*:—I. A PICTURE OF THE WAY OF LIFE DARKENED. When this will be we know not. Bunyan puts it mid-way, but sometimes it is nearer the beginning than the end. Childhood knows it not; gladness and enjoyment are his of right. But later on life darkens. But come how and when it may, it will come at the right time and in the right way. If it ever work evil, the fault will be ours. Sometimes the shadows are those of sorrow. At others, of doubt. At yet other times it is the result of some sin. The sorrow of wasted power, of lost confidence, of violated vows, is a pang which wrings the human heart with an agony it knows not how to bear. Such experiences are stern and solemn realities. II. NO MAN NEED GO DOWN THE VALLEY ALONE. There is light in the darkened way. "Thou art with me." And He is with us to help and protect. Augustine would leave Carthage to go to Rome. His pious mother, fearing the snares of Rome for her wayward boy, begged him not to go. He promised to remain, but in the night stole away. But there, where his mother feared he would be lost, he was saved. Years after he wrote thus, "Thou, O God, knowing my mother's desire, refusedst what she then asked, that Thou mightest give her what she was for ever asking." (*George Bainton.*) *The valley of the shadow of death*:—I. THE PASS AND ITS TERRORS. "The valley of the shadow of death." Get the idea of a narrow ravine, something like the Gorge of Gondo or some other stern pass upon the higher Alps, where the rocks seem piled to heaven, and the sunlight is seen above as through a narrow rift. And so troubles are sometimes heaped one upon another, pile on pile, and the road is a dreary defile. It is exceedingly gloomy. Some of you don't know such troubles. Do not seek to know. Keep bright while you can. Sing while you may. Be larks and mount aloft and sing as you mount. But some of God's people are not

much in the lark line; they are a great deal more like owls. But desponding people, if to be blamed, are yet much more to be pitied. Still, the covenant is never known to Abraham so well as when a horror of great darkness comes over him, and then he sees the shining lamp moving between the pieces of the sacrifice. And there are parts of our life which are dangerous as well as gloomy. The Khyber Pass is still terrible in men's memories, and there are Khybers in most men's lives. No doubt the Lord's ways are ways of pleasantness, but for all that there are enemies on the road to heaven. And then its solitude. This is a great trial to some spirits, and mingling in crowds is no relief, for there is no solitude of the spirit so intense as that which is often felt in crowds. Still, this valley is often traversed. Many more go by this road than most people dream. But it is not an unhallowed pathway, for our Lord Jesus Christ has gone along it. II. THE PILGRIM AND HIS PROGRESS.

1. He is calm in the prospect of his dreary passage. 2. And is steady in his progress. He walks through, does not run in haste. 3. And he is secure in his expectancy. There is a bright side to that word "through." He expects to come out into a brighter country. 4. And he is free from fear. I have read of a little lad on board a vessel in great peril. Everybody was alarmed. But he kept playing about, amused rather at the tossing of the ship. When asked what made him so fearless he replied, "My father is the captain. He knows how to manage." Let us so believe in God. Yet—5. He is not at all fanatical. He gives a good reason for his fearlessness. "Thou art with me!" III. THE SOUL AND ITS SHEPHERD.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The rod and the staff, the tokens of shepherdry, are the comforts of the saints. 1. The rod is for the numbering of the sheep. 2. For rule. 3. Guidance. 4. Urging onward. I have had to lay on the rod at times on certain fat sheep not so nimble as they ought to be. But their wool is so thick that I can scarcely make them feel. But the Great Shepherd can, and will. 5. For chastisement. 6. For protection. How David defended his sheep. May God give us all the faith expressed in our text. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*The path of life:*—I. THE PATH OF LIFE AS SHADOWED BY DEATH. "The valley of the shadow of death." David does not speak of the article of death here as some suppose. He does not say, though I may walk, or though I should walk, or though I must walk, but though I walk. He is speaking of his walking it now. There is a bright sun, it is true, in the sky of life, otherwise there could be no "shadow"; but the figure of death is so colossal that its shadow covers the whole sphere of our existence. II. THE PATH OF LIFE AS TROD WITH A FEARLESS SOUL. "I will fear no evil."

1. Some tread the valley of life with a stolid indifference. They seem utterly regardless of the dark shadows on the path, and whither the path conducts them. "Like brutes they live." 2. Some tread the path of life with a giddy frivolity. The everlasting jest and ceaseless round of hilarious excitement indicate that they have never been penetrated with a true idea of life. 3. Some tread the path of life with a slavish dread. They are afraid of their end. 4. Some tread the path of life with moral bravery. Thus did David. III. THE PATH OF LIFE AS WALKED IN COMPANIONSHIP WITH GOD. 1. Thou art with me as the infallible Guide in the ever-thickening gloom. 2. Thou art with me as a safe Protector from every conceivable evil. (*Homilist.*)

*The valley of the shadow of death:*—Preparation for death is twofold—of state and of susceptibility. We may be prepared in state, as David was when he cried, "Oh, spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more seen," but he was not prepared in feeling. But here in our text he is prepared in both ways. "I will fear no evil"; his experience was ripe for death, and he could anticipate the event with confidence. The Psalmist looked upon the Shepherd in this place as the Master of death, and so "feared no evil." I. TO SOME THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH IS A PLACE OF DANGER AND ALARM. That one could say he feared no evil is no proof that there is no evil for others. For the ungodly there is. For—1. He must feel "the sting of death," which "is sin." That removed, death is no more dangerous than a serpent whose sting is withdrawn. 2. Then, too, conscience will be roused, and there will be no means to pacify it. Conscience cannot sleep then, though they have dozed and slumbered undisturbed by the thunders of Sinai, and the noise of death cutting down some old barren fig-tree in their neighbourhood. 3. Then, too, Mercy will depart for ever. She outstays all others, but now even Mercy says, "Good-bye for ever!" "Thou didst never see a morning when I did not meet thee with my arms full of kindnesses toward thee. Thou art now going where I have not been, and whither I shall never come—Good-bye!" And the hope of man is lost! 3. There also must he meet the wrath of God without a hiding-



place. It had been declared many times that it was approaching ; but there was no way of escape. But now it is too late to turn back. God's wrath must now be faced. The terrors of God array themselves against the ungodly men. II. THE GODLY MAN'S CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF DEATH. "I will fear," &c. Yet how terrible the description of death. 1. A valley—a deep and dismal place. Some live their lives in the hilltops of prosperity, others in the vales of adversity and sorrow, but this valley lies lower than these. Yet the godly man fears not. 2. A dark valley—a valley of shadow, "the shadow of death where the light is as darkness." 3. A dreadful valley—for it belongs to death. This is its home, here its court and throne. Some have fainted at the sight of some of its subjects ; what of the King Himself ? But here is one going down into its domains. It is probable that he will run silently through, and as swiftly as he possibly can, until he is nearly breathless. No. He intends walking slowly through, as if resolved to view it well, the only time he shall go that way. Probably he intends crossing it in the narrowest place. No. He speaks of walking the whole length of the valley. Is he afraid he may fall and faint half-way ? No. He confidently trusts that he will reach the farther end. III. THE GROUNDS OF HIS CONFIDENCE. God's presence. "Thou art with me." No one is so timid as a godly man without God. He will go nowhere without Him. But with Him he will go anywhere. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. (*David Roberts, D.D.*) *The valley of the shadow of death* :—I THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE BELIEVER IS PLACED. "The valley of the shadow of death" has been supposed to describe a gloomy defile in which the traveller sees, as it were, the image of death depicted wherever he turns his eyes. Others, again, and perhaps with greater simplicity of interpretation, have found the idea of dark shadow, impenetrable gloom cast by some overhanging object which shuts out all light. The natural effect of peril is to create alarm ; and it is nothing less than a signal triumph over the strongest instincts of the human constitution for a man, when he walks "through the valley of the shadow of death," to fear no evil. It is, however, a triumph over nature, to which the religion of the Bible frequently calls, and for which she abundantly prepares her followers. II. THE FEELINGS WHICH IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HE IS ABLE TO ENTERTAIN. The Psalmist does not say, "I will not fear," though even had he said so we should have known how to interpret his words with due restrictions ; but he says, "I will fear no evil," that is, I will apprehend no real or ultimate injury. The Psalmist had made too enlarged an observation, he had passed through too varied an experience of life, to suppose that the clouds which lowered upon the scene before him would always pass away innocuous. Exactly so the Christian now has no reason to expect that he will be spared the suffering—and that to the extremity of mortal endurance—of what is painful, and desolating, and agonising ; but every Christian may be assured that all these things shall fail to do him real evil. And while this is the feeling which every child of God may be expected to entertain, in every condition in which he can be placed of deadly gloom and peril, so it is peculiarly the sentiment which he is called upon to cherish when treading in particular that dreary path which, to most minds, is suggested by the appellation, "the valley of the shadow of death." A sharp thrill of undefined yet overwhelming terror is apt to shoot across his soul that, in the words of the Psalmist, he exclaims, "My heart is sore vexed within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me." But it will be but for a moment that the Christian, trusting in his Redeemer, will suffer such gloomy thoughts as these to involve his spirit ; presently, as he proceeds deeper and deeper down the perilous descent, you will hear a voice of solemn yet not desponding melody ascending from the shades, "I will trust and not be afraid" ; "Yea, though I walk through," &c. III. THE REASONS ON WHICH THE PSALMIST GROUNDS AND JUSTIFIES HIS PERSUASION. That, with whatever circumstances of direct and most deadly peril he might be environed, no real evil should befall him. 1. The fact of Jehovah's friendly presence. 2. The fact of Jehovah's pastoral care : "Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." The Scriptural expression, "to be with one," denotes the special presence of Jehovah with those whom He loves, to guide, to help, to protect, to favour, and to bless them ; as when Abimelech, for example, congratulated Abraham on the manifest tokens which his history presented that he was the object of Almighty favour, by saying, "The Lord is with thee in all that thou dost,"—when our Lord, in order to encourage His apostle amidst the arduous toils and trials that awaited him at Corinth, spake to him in vision,—“Fear not, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.” (*T. B. Patterson, M.A.*) *A funeral*

*sermon*.—Death is what human nature is prone to dread. Most men shrink, as long as they are able, from the entrance into “the valley of the shadow” of it. Let us consider what are the evils to be encountered in passing through “the valley of the shadow of death.” I. In the first place, THE PAINS OF DEATH MUST BE ENCOUNTERED BY US; and these fill many minds with dismay. God has been pleased, notwithstanding the redemption of our race from utter destruction, to leave in the world demonstrations of their fall, and amongst these are the anguish and manifold distresses which accompany our mortality. II. The valley of death is rendered terrible to man, because it INTERRUPTS AND TERMINATES ALL HIS EARTHLY PURSUITS AND EXPECTATIONS. III. THE SEPARATION FROM THE OBJECTS WHO WERE ENDEARED TO US, and the scenes and pleasures which delighted us in the present world. But how happy those who in this solemn hour can entrust not only themselves, but all whom they love, to the tender and faithful protection of God. IV. Another thing which renders death terrible to many is THE DARKNESS WITH WHICH IT IS ENCOMPASSED. Shadows, clouds, and gloom rest upon it. To the infidel it is dismally obscure. Bones and ashes are all he can discover. Conscience fills it with ghosts and spectres and images of terror. They shudder as they enter. They cry aloud for light. V. But the greatest of all the causes of anxiety and fear which the children of men encounter at the approach of death is THE APPREHENSION OF THE JUDGMENT WHICH WILL ENSUE. (*Bishop Dehon.*) *Through the dark valley*:—Observe that dark valley attentively. Consider what it is; whither it leads; what its shadow means; what are its evils; what its security in the midst of those evils. You are daily approaching it. I. A GLOOMY SHADOW. II. A FEARLESS TRAVELLER. III. A PRESENT GOD. (*R. Halley, M.A.*) *The valley of the shadow*:—We are debtors, every one of us, to that old poet, whoever he was, who, in ransacking a teeming brain—teeming with images of idyllic peace and happiness, and also with images of nameless dread and gloom—lighted upon the “valley of the shadow of death,” as Bunyan afterwards lighted upon a “place where was a den,” and gave to all that in human experience which before death is worse than death itself, a local habitation and a name. Different forms of the religious sentiment have their different values in regard to the dismal experience thus happily named. None of them has actually the value assigned to it. Religion, natural temperament, courage, cheeriness, all mingle in the confidence of him who here says “I will fear no evil.” For aught we know, there may have been as much of the one as of the other. Natural temper and disposition count for much, usually for more than anything else, in the most trying moments of human life. Then, the natural man is apt to part company with his costume of habits and customs, and to show himself as he was born, the bravest of the brave or the weakest of the weak. It is not the most pious man in the regiment, I suppose, who is always the coolest in the forlorn hope. Some men, like John Wesley, are brave on land who are great cowards at sea; others, like some of Elizabeth’s buccaneers, are timid in regard to the least adversity occurring in a hospital, but undaunted in regard to it if it threatens in a gale. Not according to differences of religious belief, but according to idiosyncrasies of disposition or accidental habits of mind, the valley of the shadow of death varies its character. As regards the last fact of all, which makes all human life a tragedy, we who look forward to it with a shudder cannot help envying the coolies of St. Helena and elsewhere, who lie down to die as peaceably as if it were to sleep; or the Turkish soldiers at Plevna, who preserved such coolness in presence of the horrors there. You can scarcely call their fatalism religious sentiment, yet it did that for them. Some surgeons say that there are people without nerves. What is a terrible ordeal to some in the way of pain, to others is a mere trifle. Now, though religious people will hardly allow it, it is a fact that natural temperament has far more to do with heroism in its most striking forms than religion has. But religion has to do with it, and different forms of the religious sentiment have, therefore, different values in this respect. That it is glorious to die for one’s country was an idea with which the whole Greek and Roman life was saturated in a way unknown to the Hebrew race. That sentiment produced its natural effect in Plutarch’s *Lives*, the reading of which is like reading the Charge of the Light Brigade. But it is when you come down to Christian times that you have the religious sentiment, the rise of which takes you back to this Psalm and earlier, and we find it so pervading the lives of multitudes of common men and women that they are found to be instinct with a courage and patience which can hardly be matched in Plutarch. It is a heroism, not of the general and his staff, but of plain people. And we have it here in this Psalm. The trust in the

Divine Shepherd is an antidote to all alarm. What that sentiment has done to lighten, for countless multitudes of human beings, all adversity, and the last adversity of all, to make the unendurable tolerable or even welcome, may be partly imagined but cannot certainly be told. It is still what it has been—to multitudes it is still what nothing else is or could be in the way of solving the enigmas of life and making the heavy and the weary weight of it intelligible and supportable. (*J. Service, D.D.*) *Deep shades*:—The image of David's great distress, "the valley," or ravine, "of the shadow of death," or, as it may be translated, "of deep shades," can, without any fancifulness, be connected with the scenery through which he passed in his flight. He must, after crossing Olivet, have descended to the fords of the Jordan by one of the rocky passes which lead from the table-land of Jerusalem. These deep ravines are full of ghastly shadows, and David passed down one of them as the evening had begun to fall, and waited by the ford of Jordan till midnight. It is not improbable that we have here the source of the image in this verse. Such a march must have impressed itself strongly on his imagination. The weird and fierce character of the desolate ravine, the long and deathly shadows which chilled him as the sun sank, the fierce curses of Shimei, the fear behind him, the agony in his own heart repeating the impression of the landscape, fastened the image of it in his memory for ever. He has thrown it into poetry in this verse. For now, when he mused upon his trial, he transferred to the present feelings of his heart at Mahanaim the agony of that terrible day, but added to it the declaration of the faith in God which his deliverance had made strong within him. And his words have become since then the expression of the feelings of all men in the intensity of trial. Not merely in the last great death-trial, for God knows that there are valleys of the shadow of death in life itself which are worse than death a thousand times. Thousands welcome death as the reliever, the friend,—they who have seen every costly argosy of hope sink like lead in the waters of the past, and whose future stretches before them a barren plain of dreary sea on which a fiery sun is burning; and they who look back on a past of unutterable folly and darker sin, and who know that never, never more "the freshness of youth's early inspiration can return." The innocent morning is gone, and they hide their heads now from the fiery simoom of remorse in the desert of their guilty life. It is the conscience's valley of the shadow of death. There are times, too, even in youth, when, by a single blow, all the odour and colour have been taken out of living, when the treachery of lover or friend has made us say, as we were tortured and wrung with the bitterness of bitterness, that all is evil and not good. It is the heart's valley of the shadow of death. And there are times in the truest Christian life when all faith is blotted out, and God becomes to us a phantom, a fate, impersonal, careless, and we cry out that we have no Father in Heaven; and of our prayer, too, it may be said, though we have prayed, oh how fervently, "He answered never a word." It is the spirit's valley of the shadow of death. Now, what was David's refuge in one of these awful hours? It was faith in God, the Ever-Near. David had entered the valley of the shadow of death of the heart; he had been betrayed, insulted, exiled by the one whom he had loved best. It was enough to make him disbelieve in Divine goodness and human tenderness, enough to harden his heart into steel against God, into cruelty against man. In noble faith he escaped from that ruin of the soul, and threw himself upon God—"I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." The next verse, supposing the Psalm to have been written at Mahanaim, is at once comprehensible. For far away in the Eastern city there came consolation to David, through the visit and help of Barzillai, who brought him food. "Thou preparest a table for me," &c. One of the sad comforts of trial is this, that it is the touchstone of friendship. We realise then who are true gold. We often lose in trial what is calculable; we oftener gain what is incalculable. Precisely the same principle holds good in the spiritual world. The blessing of all trial is that it disperses the vain shows of life on which we rested, and makes Christ, the eternal Certainty, more deeply known. But how? How do we know another? Only by entering into his spirit, by sharing in his life. There is a broad distinction between an acquaintance and a friend. We may see an acquaintance every day, but we never see his heart. We hover with him over the surfaces of things, touching, it may be, now and then the real inward life as a swallow touches a stream in its flight, but we never dwell with him within the temple of inward thought or enter with him into the inner shrine of feeling. A friend—how different! one to whom your heart has opened itself freely, to receive from whom is pleasure, for whom to sacrifice yourself is joy. So we become at home in his nature,



and so is it with Christ and the Christian man. If you would be the friend of Christ you must partake of His life—the life of self-sacrifice. (*A. S. Brooke, M.A.*) *The shadow of death*.—This valley, in Bunyan's dream, lies about midway in the journey of life. This is one of those revelations of the soul's experience which makes Bunyan's book a mirror. If this valley lay right across our path at the outset it would wither our life at the spring. While if it came too near the end it would be too late to bless our souls. No, not near the beginning is that valley. I have often seen a little child sit beside the coffin that held its mother, with as fair a light on its face as I hope to see in heaven. And I have said, there is no valley and shadow of death for these little ones. Nor, either, for those who are still young. Sorrow comes, but they recover. They soon resume the natural habit of their life if you let them alone. They break out into the warm bright world again, like a Norway spring, and it is by the tender mercy of God that they do so. And in old age that valley and shadow lie behind us. When a great English painter in water colours was past work, and was waiting for his summons to depart,—for he was ninety-one,—he told his servant to bring in his masterpiece, that he might see it once more before he died. It was a picture of a shipwreck. He looked at it a good while and then said, "Bring me my pencils and lift me up; I must brighten that black cloud. It used to seem just right, but I see now it is too dark, and I must brighten it before I go." And when it was done he died. Now, I doubt not that when he painted that picture the cloud was not one shade blacker than he felt it ought to be; because true painters always dip their pencils first in the water of their own lives, and press the pigments out of their hearts and brains. But the way from middle age to ninety-one had lain upward into the light, the sweet, calm sunset of his life. And so it is with every healthful old age. Travelling into these high latitudes we touch at last a polar summer, where the morning twilight of the new day comes out of heaven to blend with the evening twilight of the old. The fear of what death may do, and the awful sense of what death can do, falls on us most heavily, through the prime of our life, when all our powers are sturdiest. It is in mid-ocean that the storms come. And this experience is universal. I notice it in all the saints whose lives are revealed to us in the Bible. And Christ Himself passed through it. Bunyan makes all his pilgrims who come to any good go down into it. But with a wonderfully sweet pathos, he makes it easier for the lame man who is getting on in years, and for the maiden, and for the mother with her children, than he will ever allow it to be for stout stalwart souls like his own. If a man should come to me and say, "I have never been down there, I know nothing about it," then his future is a sorry one. It is because we have a soul and a future that we have to go through all this. But for this man would be mere vanity and hollowness. And there is a great growth of goodness down in that valley. Do not go alone, then. Have God with you as David did. Muster all the promises you can hold in your heart. I would try to trace the beatitudes even in the flames of hell. And look on to the dawn of the new day. (*R. Collyer.*) *The valley of the shadow of death*.—This hymn is the pilgrim's song of the soul on its way to eternity. The Psalm is beautiful and impressive, if we take the central death as its keynote. Then all that goes before is the preparation for that dark crisis which is the turning-point of endless joy. The valley rules the whole; what precedes is its anticipation, and itself is the anticipation of heaven. 1. Mark with what exquisite simplicity the anticipation of the valley is introduced. The idea of death is inwrought into the habitual thought of the godly man. There is a sense in which life is a continual alternation of light and shade, of open pastures and shaded valleys. The whole of our probation may be said to be spent under the shadow of the great death that sin hath begotten, of the terrible cloud that has come between us and God. True religion is a constant and distinct realisation of the fact that we live to die, and must so live as not to be taken by surprise. This will give to life a certain solemnity and pathos which nothing else will give. It is, nevertheless, certain that the expectation of the valley cannot really distress the religious soul. It is very different from that horror which the ungodly and the unsanctified feel. There are, indeed, some who are all their lifetime in bondage, though true Christians, through want of trust in the resources of the Gospel. Many reasons conspire to this palsy of their faith. They love the world too much, they do not drink deeply enough of the river of life, they do not meditate as they ought on eternal things, and thus they cannot join the chorus of our hymn. But the anticipation that makes this Psalm so glad is better taught. The Christian singer is one who lives under the powers of the world to come; and those powers are to him the working forces of the present state. He lives

in a supernatural world, and regards everything in its relation to that world. The thought of the valley becomes the familiar and cheerful habit of the soul. It does not diminish the energy of life nor blunt the appetite for such pleasures as God does not interdict. 2. The singer sings his way into the valley that he had predicted for himself. The language of his poetry blends the future and the present, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." The pilgrim is guided into the valley by the Good Shepherd Himself. Here is the secret link between death and preparation for death. The blessedness of all our religion, whether in life or death, is union with Jesus. Our preparation to die well is the habitual communion of our soul with God. Jesus went that way of sorrows before us. We may be sure that the Saviour is most intimately with and in His dying servant. His rod is the symbol of His authority in the domain of death: it is His alone. The staff is the symbol of the strength He gives the dying saints. The pastor's crook, the shepherd's rod, is no other than the Redeemer's mediatorial sceptre swayed over one special region of His vast empire, that which is under the shadow of death. We may interpret the staff as that special support which the Redeemer affords to every dying saint when his heart and flesh would otherwise fail. (*W. B. Pope.*) **I will fear no evil.**—*On the fear of death*:—Fear, though a natural passion, becomes the occasion of innumerable disquietudes and infelicities. It has the same effect upon the real evils and calamities of life which a misty air has upon the objects of sight: it makes them appear confused and indistinct, and at the same time much larger than they are in reality. The object most universally dreaded is death. It requires all the aids of philosophy and of religion to enable the wisest and best of us to look forward to this event with composure. Give some general directions which may enable us, in measure, to overcome the fear of death. 1. That we maintain a virtuous habit of mind and course of life, and exercise ourselves to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man. 2. Make the idea of death familiar to our minds, by frequently considering our latter end. Many of the usual terrors of death appear upon examination to be imaginary, or of very little moment. 3. Reflect that this is a natural and unavoidable event which is common to all the human race. 4. We should preserve in our minds a lively conviction and devout sense of the wise and righteous government of Almighty God, and cheerfully resign ourselves and all our concerns to His direction. 5. Look forward, with joyful expectation, to a state of perfect and endless felicity in the life to come. (*W. Enfield.*) **Courageous faith**:—That true faith is a courageous grace; it inspires the soul with a holy and undaunted boldness amidst the greatest of dangers. 1. Some of those evils that are ready to intimidate and discourage the hearts of the Lord's people in a time of danger. Their own weakness and insufficiency. The might and multitude of their enemies. A sense of guilt and fear of wrath. The prevalence of indwelling sin. The black clouds of desertion. The wrath of man, and fury of the persecutor. The dangerous situation of the Church and cause of God, and the approach of death. 2. Some account of that faith which fortifies the soul against the fear of these evils. Sometimes it is called a trusting in the Lord, or a looking to the Lord, or a staying ourselves on the Lord, or a casting of our burden on the Lord. Some of its ingredients are—a knowledge and uptaking of a God in Christ, revealing Himself as reconciled, and making over Himself to us in a well-ordered covenant. A firm and fixed persuasion of the truth and certainty of the whole revelation of God's mind and will in the Word. An application of the promises to the soul itself in particular. A persuasion of the power, love, and faithfulness of the Promiser. A renouncing of all other refuges. Some concomitants of this faith. A blessed quietness and tranquillity of soul. A waiting upon the Lord in the way of duty. Earnest prayer at a throne of grace. A holy obedience or regard unto all God's commandments. Often with a soul-ravishing joy in the Lord. The courage of faith appears from the serenity with which it possesses the soul; the hard work and service it will adventure; the bold and daring challenges it gives to all enemies and accusers; the weapons which it wields; the battles it has fought and the victories it has gained; the heavy burdens it will venture to bear; the hard and difficult passes that faith will open; the great exploits which it has performed, and the trophies of victory and triumph which it wears. 3. That Christian fortitude and boldness which makes a believer fear no evil. The seat and subject of this Christian fortitude is the heart of a believer, renewed by sovereign grace. This fortitude consists in a clear and distinct knowledge and uptaking of the truth as it is in Jesus. It makes God's Word the boundary of faith and practice. A tenacious adherence to truth and duty. A holy contempt of all a man can suffer in this present world. Cheerfulness and

alacrity of spirit. 4. The influence faith has upon this boldness. It inspires the soul by presenting God to the soul ; by enabling the soul to make right estimate of truth, and by curing it of the fear of man. It views the inside of troubles for Christ, as well as the outside of them. And it keeps the eye of the soul fixed on Jesus. (*E. Erskine.*)

*On death.*—This Psalm exhibits the pleasing picture of a pious man rejoicing in the goodness of heaven. He looks round him on his state, and his heart overflows with gratitude. Amidst the images of tranquillity and happiness one object presents itself which is sufficient to overcast the mind and to damp the joy of the greatest part of men ; that is, the approach of death. With perfect composure and serenity the Psalmist looks forward to the time when he is to pass through the “valley of the shadow of death.” The prospect, instead of dejecting him, appears to heighten his triumph, by that security which the presence of his Almighty Guardian afforded him. Such is the happy distinction which good men enjoy in a situation the most formidable to human nature. That threatening aspect which appals others, carries no terror to them. Let us consider what death is in itself, and by what means good men are enabled to meet it with fortitude. It may be considered in three views. As the separation of the soul from the body. As the conclusion of the present life. As the entrance into a new state of existence. The terrors of death are, in fact, the great guardians of life. They excite in every individual that desire of self-preservation which is nature’s first law. They reconcile him to bear the distresses of life with patience. They prompt him to undergo its useful and necessary labours with alacrity ; and they restrain him from many of those evil courses by which his safety would be endangered. If death were not dreaded and abhorred as it is by many, no public order could be preserved in the world. . . . To preserve it within such bounds that it shall not interrupt us in performing the proper offices and duties of life is the distinction of the brave man above the coward, and to surmount it in such a degree that it shall not, even in near prospect, deject our spirit or trouble our peace, is the great preference which virtue enjoys above guilt. It has been the study of the wise and reflecting, in every age, to attain this steadiness of mind. Philosophy pursued it as its chief object ; and professed that the chief end of its discipline was to enable its votaries to conquer the fear of death. In what lights does death appear most formidable to mankind. 1. As the termination of our present existence ; the final period of all its joys and hopes. The dejection into which we are apt to sink at such a juncture will bear proportion to the degree of our attachment to the objects which we leave, and to the importance of those resources which remain with us when they are gone. 2. As the gate which opens into eternity. Under this view it has often been the subject of terror to the serious and reflecting. We must not judge of the sentiments of men at the approach of death by their ordinary train of thought in the days of health and ease. Their views of moral conduct are then too often superficial. Here appears the great importance of those discoveries which Christianity has made concerning the government of the universe. It displays the ensigns of grace and clemency. What completes the triumph of good men over death is the prospect of eternal felicity. To those who have lived a virtuous life, and who die in the faith of Christ, the whole aspect of death is changed. Death is no longer the tyrant who approaches with an iron rod, but the messenger that brings the tidings of life and liberty. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*)

*Facing death.*—When Sir Henry Havelock lay dying he said to his friend and fellow-soldier Sir James Outram, “For more than forty years I have so ruled my life that when death came I might face it without fear.”

*Looking into the great abyss.*—How we die is certainly of much less importance than how we live ; but still it strengthens faith to see the hope and courage that are sometimes, but by no means always, felt by God’s own people at the last. During the sixteen weeks in which Sir Bartle Frere was dying, though he was nearly always in great pain, not one murmur escaped him. Just at the end he said, “I have looked down into the great abyss, but God has never left me through it all.” “Name that Name when I am in pain,” he once said to his wife ; “it calls me back.” (*Quiver.*)

*The power of the presence of Christ.*—“Thou art with me.” I have eagerly seized on this ; for out of all the terrors which gather themselves into the name of death, one has stood forth as a champion fear to terrify and daunt me. It is the loneliness of death. “I die alone.” Now, loneliness is a thing which we must learn to face in our work, in the separations of life, and in times of quiet. Certainly, whether we like it or not, we must be alone in death, as far as this world is concerned. And men preach to us detachment. “Sit loosely to the world,” they say, that the wrench may be less when it comes. But the Good Shepherd says



rather, learn attachment. It is His promise, "Fear not; I will be with thee." It is our confidence, "I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." Nay, more; it is our joy, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And is not this the true answer to our fears: How can I go to meet that shadow? How will my faith stand its cold embrace? How shall I ever believe in the bright promise of a land beyond, when here all is dark? Let us ask rather: How am I going to meet the duty just before me? Is He with me now? Have I learned to find Him in the quiet hours of the day? Have I found His presence in desolating sorrow? Have I felt His hand in darkness and doubt? If so, I need not look forward. He is leading me on, step by step and day by day. He is habituating me, little by little, to the withdrawal of the light, and to utter trust in Him. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." "Thou art with me." Now is the time to make firm that companionship. To be still, and know that He is God. To find the guiding Hand in all its strength and security amid the death and life of each day's hopes and fears. And then, when we enter the shadow, still it will be "with God onwards." (*W. C. E. Newbolt, M.A.*)

**Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.**—*Comfort through the rod and staff*:—What is the shepherd's rod? It is the symbol of his defending power. It is the weapon by which our Shepherd strikes down our adversaries. He is ever on the alert to ward off from us threatening ills. What is the staff? We would rather call it the shepherd's crook, which is often bent or hooked at one end. Beneath it the sheep pass one by one to be numbered or told. By it the shepherd restrains them from wandering, or hooks them out of holes into which they may fall; by it also he corrects them when they are disobedient. In each of these thoughts there is comfort for the tried child of God. We are numbered amongst God's sheep as we pass one by one beneath the touch of the Shepherd's crook. By the Shepherd's staff we are also extricated from circumstances of peril and disaster into which we may have fallen through our own folly and sin. By the staff the shepherd also corrects his sheep. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

*The wonderful staff*:—I. IT IS WONDERFUL FOR ITS POWER TO PROTECT. David had found this as a shepherd when, by means of his staff, he vanquished the lion and the bear. So the Bible is our defence against our soul's enemies. See how Jesus used it (*Matt. iv. 1, &c.*). It is wonderful for its power to protect. II. IT IS WONDERFUL FOR ITS POWER TO COMFORT. Well, God's Word is like a staff for this reason. It gives strength to His people when they feel weak and ready to faint under their labours or their trials. III. IT IS A WONDERFUL STAFF, BECAUSE OF ITS POWER TO SAVE. (*James i. 21.*) The Word of God is able to save the soul. (*R. Newton.*)

*The shepherd's rod and staff*:—In 1849 Dr. Duff was travelling near Simla under the shadow of the great Himalaya mountains. One day his way led to a narrow bridle-path cut out on the face of a steep ridge; along this narrow path that ran so near the great precipice he saw a shepherd leading on his flock following him, but now and then the shepherd stopped and looked back. If he saw a sheep creeping up too far on the one hand, or going too near the edge of the dangerous precipice on the other, he would at once turn back and go to it, gently pulling it back. He had a long rod as tall as himself, round the lower half of which was twisted a band of iron. There was a crook at one end of the rod, and it was with this the shepherd took hold of one of the hind legs of the sheep to pull it back. The thick band of iron at the other end of the rod was really a staff, and was ready for use whenever he saw a hyena or wolf or some other troublesome animal coming near the sheep, for especially at night these creatures prowled about the flock. With the iron part of the rod he would give a good blow when an attack was threatened. In *Psa. xxiii. 4* we have mention made of "Thy rod and Thy staff." There is meaning in both, and distinct meaning. God's rod draws us back, kindly and lovingly, if we go aside from His path. God's staff protects us against the onset, open or secret, whether it be men or devils which are the enemies watching an opportunity for attack. (*Life of Dr. Duff.*)

**Ver. 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.**—*The Lord's guests*:—This is a desert scene. A hot, panting fugitive is fleeing for his life, pursued and hunted by the forces of a fierce revenge. At last he touches the tent-rope of a desert-man, and now he is a guest, and a guest is safe. Such is the undimmed glory of Arab hospitality. To injure a guest is the mark of the deepest depravity. Such is the desert symbol in the text. What is its spiritual significance? The soul is a fugitive, in flight across the plains of time. The soul is pursued by enemies, which disturb its peace and threaten its destruction. What

are these enemies that chase the soul across the ways of time? 1. The sin of yesterday. I cannot get away from it. 2. The temptation of to-day. Sometimes he approaches me in deceptive deliberateness; sometimes his advance is so stealthy that in a moment I am caught in his snare. 3. The death that awaits me to-morrow. Man seeks to banish that presence from his conscience, but he pathetically fails. Whither can we turn? On the whole vast plain is there one tabernacle whose tent-ropes we may touch, and in whose circle of hospitality we may find food, refuge, and rest? In the Lord our God is the fugitive's refuge. In the Lord our God we are secured against the destructiveness of our yesterdays, the menaces of to-day, and the darkening fears of the morrow. We are the Lord's guests, and our sanctuary is inviolable. And what shall I find in the tent? The enemies frown at the open door, while the Psalmist calmly sits down to a feast with his Lord. We shall find a sure defence, refreshing repose, and abundant provision. (*J. H. Jewett, M.A.*) *Feasting amidst enemies*.—1. That the malicious envy of evil men hath not been able to hinder blessings from descending upon the godly. 2. That it hath not been able to tear off the blessings which have descended. 3. That upon their greater fretting and contriving God yet hath added more blessings upon His servants. God doth not at all depend upon wicked men in the benediction of His servants. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *God's hospitality*.—1. He provides for His guests a feast in the midst of their enemies. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." (1) The life of the true is a feast. The figure implies three things. A variety in the pleasant. Variety is ever the characteristic and the charm of beauty. How boundlessly varied the blessings which heaven has spread out for the enjoyment of the good on this earth. There are the sensuous, the intellectual, the social, and the religious. The figure implies an abundance in the pleasant. It is almost essential to a feast that the provision should be ample. Meagreness and scarcity are carefully avoided at banquets. How immeasurable are the blessings provided for the good. The figure implies a social participation in the pleasant. A feast is not for one but for many, and generally for those of such kindred sentiment as will heighten the enjoyment. Life is social. (2) The life of the true is a feast prepared by God. "Thou preparest." Not only does He prepare the feast for His guests, but He prepares His guests for the feast. The banquet, however sumptuous and varied in its provisions, is worthless to all but those who are inclined to participate, and who have the necessary appetite. But the point here is that the feast is spread out in the "presence of enemies." A good man has ever had enemies, and ever will. David had them. They now surrounded him as he was feasting at the table of God's providence. There is something gratifying to a man in feasting before enemies. (1) There is a gratification of the feeling of independence. Enjoying a banquet with the eye of an enemy on you, you seem to dare him to do his worst. You have the happy feeling that unrighteous malice cannot injure you. (2) There is a gratification of the feeling of benevolence. Sitting down, enjoying a banquet sufficient for all your enemies, and to which they were invited but would not enter, you feel that as they look on there is a splendid opportunity for them to learn their folly, relent, and attend the entertainment. (3) There is a gratification of our religious feeling. You feel, as you enjoy the rich banquet provided for you, that you have an opportunity of showing your enemies the wonderful bountifulness of the Master of the feast. You give Him the praise. As a Host. 2. He follows His guests constantly with His goodness. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." 3. He entertains His guests for ever in His house. "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." What a house is His! How vast, how grand, how infinitely numerous and elegant its apartments! The universe is His house. "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. To dwell in this house for ever, no longer a prodigal in a far country, no longer a wearied pilgrim in the desert, but a son settled down for ever in the mansions of the Father. (*Homilist.*) *The conflict of life*.—That life is a conflict is an assertion made so frequently that it has become one of the common-places of moralists. But the common-place assertion contains, nevertheless, a deep truth to which we have all at some time or other to bear undisguised and heartfelt witness. We have enemies; we are liable to commit grievous mistakes. We find, in ways innumerable, that our very strength is weakness, that we are sadly imperfect and fallible. Our enemies take advantage of our weaknesses, and use them as weapons for our destruction. It is no vague and meaningless metaphor which describes as our enemies "the world, the flesh, and the devil." Whether we will or not, life is a conflict, as God doubtless designed it to be. The hostile influences awaken and invigorate the

noblest elements of our nature, supply them with a field of action, and by means of risks and dangers train them to hardihood and endurance. God is educating us for higher things, that we may be resigned amid trial, pure in the midst of temptation, trustful though surrounded by darkness, and thankful even when our will is crossed. The servants of God are to be heroes. How can they triumph if they do not strive? There is deep truth enshrined in that old Oriental legend, according to which no one can sing a song to the immortals who cannot be the hero of his tale or live the song he sings. He must in this way vindicate his right to speak of deeds of high and holy daring, and therefore does God place him under such forms of life as his own imagination has portrayed, that He may try him whether he be a hero indeed. (*James Stuart.*) *The lyric of perfect trust*:—"The nightingale of Psalms," somebody has called it—filling the night; flooding it with its song when every other song is hushed. "The pearl of Psalms," another has called it—pure, beautiful, and beyond price. "The Pleiades," says a third, among the constellations into which these ancient singers have mapped the heaven of love and hope and peace which bent over them. Here is a man who believed in God,—believed in Him in no fictitious sense. David had in his mind a personal Being of infinite love, wisdom, and beneficence whom he had made his own—"my Shepherd." What has such a man to say of life? Four things. I. THE WEALTH, COMPLETENESS, FULNESS OF IT. It is something worth possessing. A new science has been developed of late—the science of being miserable. Side by side with this there is a mistaken and exaggerated pietism, which, in the name of religion, takes hold of everything by the wrong end. Things are what you make them to be. Life is what you make it. Take the man who has a personal hold of God. See in him the wealth, completeness, fulness of life. Full provision is made for all the necessities of man's nature. Life is a feast: "Thou preparest a table for me." I will tell you how life looks to me. 1. I am—personal existence is mine. I have a being, the integrity, the sanctity of which even God respects, the boundaries of which even my Maker does not trench upon. 2. The world is mine. The heavens and the earth are mine. 3. Then there is the world of ideas, which come greeting you like troops of angels, from the books of gifted souls, from the mystic recesses of your own heart. 4. Friendship has been yours. The joy of serving, the joy of charity, the joy of dispensing sympathy, of bearing burdens which are not your own. 5. The happiness and ennoblement of benefiting the world. II. HERE IS THE SENSE OF PERFECT SECURITY, OF ABSOLUTE FREEDOM FROM ALL ANXIETY. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." What a load would be lifted off some minds if they could only say that, and be sure of it. Many are spoiling their life through the dread of what *may be* somewhere in the future. III. YOU HAVE THE RECORD HERE OF DELIVERANCES, RESTORATIONS. "He restoreth my soul." The Psalm does not give an altogether rose-coloured view of life. Perils, fears are implied, if not plainly stated. They are the background of the Psalm, but that only brings out the Psalm into brighter relief. Take the dark side first. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." That is not the valley of death. It is the valley of doubt. It is the sorrow into which you can put no meaning. It is the agony of remorse. But from these things God restores us. Very graphic is this language. Engulfed, overwhelmed in these things, He giveth back my soul to me. Shall I speak of forgiveness, or of sorrow, or of doubt? IV. A DETERMINATION ARISING FROM THIS EXPERIENCE OF GOD. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." It means, I will live in free intercourse, in frank fellowship, in unbroken friendship with God. That is the first meaning; but it does mean the material house also,—the temple of the Lord, where we meet to renew our vows, and to remind ourselves in concert of the God who is the inspiration of our life. (*J. Morlais Jones.*) *The table prepared in presence of foes*:—These words are generally supposed to allude to the seasonable hospitality which Barzillai and his friends gave to David during his flight before Absalom. Then the hospitality of strangers upon whom he had no claim revived the heart that had been sorely stricken by the ingratitude of his own flesh and blood. Such was the table to which David refers; and such were the enemies in whose presence it was prepared. It was so remarkable, so well-timed, and so suitable in every respect that the Psalmist could not fail to recognise in it the direct interposition of God's own hand. It was a miracle of Divine providence. There are three points of resemblance between the provision made for David and the provision made for us. These are its Divine preparation, its abundance and suitableness, and its being made in the presence of our enemies. I. THE ENEMIES IN WHOSE PRESENCE OUR TABLE



IS PREPARED. In ancient Greek fable we are told about the Harpies, monstrous creatures with the bodies and wings and long claws of birds, and the faces of maidens pale with hunger. They were sent by the gods to torment the blind prophet Phineus, who had offended them by his misdeeds. Whenever a meal was placed before the unfortunate man the Harpies darted down from the air and carried it off, and either devoured the food themselves or rendered it unfit to be eaten. It was with the utmost difficulty that he was delivered from these frightful enemies, by the prowess of two of the Argonauts who had come thither in search of the golden fleece. Like all classic fables, this one has a profound moral. Here man is represented as a tiller of the ground, upon whom the Divine curse has been pronounced because of his sins, that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread; wise by insight and experience in regard to the common operations of agriculture, but blind as to the issues and results of these operations, and ignorant of what may be the increase of his sowing and the harvest of his toil, if any. In the Harpies we see represented the various enemies that are connected with the growth and supply of our food that are constantly on the watch to prevent us reaping the fruit of our labours, and rendering it unprofitable and unpalatable when it is reaped. Since sin came into the world God has ordained that man should encounter in full force the unkindly elements of nature. Nothing is more precarious than the growth of the corn upon which we depend for our daily bread. It is surrounded continually by innumerable enemies. There is—1. Unsuitable soil and climate. It is within a comparatively small area of the earth's surface that we can grow our corn. Beyond that area it is too cold or too hot. 2. The growth of our corn has many enemies of the animal and vegetable world to encounter. It has to contend with its own kind. Weeds, thorns, and thistles cumber the ground, and in their growth endeavour to choke and starve the corn and gain sole possession of the soil for themselves. There are birds that eat the seed as soon as it is sown in the field. There are caterpillars and insects that prey upon the tender blade. And worst of all, there are rusts and mildews that grow with its growth, and appear only when the full corn is in the ear, and turn the nutritious grain into black dust and ashes. And there are human enemies as well as natural. Competitions and rights restrict the cultivation of the soil; and commercial interests cause unequal distribution of its produce. The farmer has to encounter the difficulties of the market. Man, in having thus to grow his food amid a continual struggle with hostile forces, is taught in the most impressive way the solemn lesson of his dependence on God. II. THE TABLE WHICH IS THUS PREPARED FOR US. It is wisely adapted to our necessities as human beings. What a table is thus spread every year. On the table of the wilderness is spread spontaneously a plentiful feast of grass, wild fruits, and herbs for the sustenance of the dumb, helpless creatures that can neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. On the table of the cultivated haunts of men are spread, year after year, the golden cornfields which witness to human industry, prudence, and foresight. What sacred memories gather round the table thus so richly furnished! III. WHO IT IS THAT HAS PREPARED THIS TABLE FOR US. The harvest is the subject of a Divine covenant engagement. Our table is prepared by God's own hand. The common event hides from us the Divine hand. In reality, in every human operation man's part is utterly trifling compared with God's. When we ask God to give us day by day our daily bread we simply ask that God would enable us to live from hand to mouth during all our life. To the use of one day's supply the laws of providence restrict the rich and the poor alike. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Feasting before enemies*.—In the former part of the Psalm the writer represents himself as a sheep enjoying the sure protection of a Divine Shepherd; but here he represents himself as a guest, receiving all the attentions of a kind and generous host. I. THAT DAVID CONSIDERED HIMSELF AS PROVIDED FOR AND DISTINGUISHED BY GOD. All in prosperous circumstances should adopt the language of the text. Would that they did. Then they would recognise in all the good things they enjoy so many provisions of a feast prepared by His abounding love. But not alone will this thought reveal your privileges, it will impress your obligations. It was accounted, of old, an awful thing to violate the understood obligations of hospitality. The eating together bound together. "He who did eat of my bread hath lifted up the heel against me" was the pathetic complaint of the Psalmist. Does not this show, in a striking light, the conduct of those who receive good at the hand of God, to return evil? They are guests, entertained with bountiful kindness, and breaking all the laws of such entertainment; they dishonour the author of their weal and their welcome, and add treachery to transgression. But if the description of the

text applies to the blessing of our outward and temporal estate, much more does it apply to the state of grace in which believers in Christ Jesus stand. The provisions and enjoyments of the Gospel excel all others. What table, however richly spread, is to be compared to that to which Christ unites us? II. AND ALL THIS WAS AND IS "IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES." David reached the throne of Israel through such opposition that it made him a type of Him who, before He sat down at the right hand of God, "endured the Cross and despised the shame." The associations of things wonderfully augment and diminish their importance; and the association of witnesses is one of the most potent of all. Disgrace and punishment would lose the greatest part of their evil if they lost all their publicity; and honour and reward are rendered infinitely more sweet by being conferred before our fellows. It was not the confinement so much as the exposure of the pillory that made it terrible as a mode of chastisement; and where would be the heroes of this world if there were no despatches and no histories? The best of us live far more in other men than we are willing to acknowledge; we are the meek servants of social opinion. And as social opinion is a motive, so is it a recompense. The censure of the world may be a great chastisement, when there are no other pains and penalties; and its praise a sufficient guerdon, without riches and honours. In David's case there was everything that could make the presence of spectators significant and important. He rose to dignity and plenty in spite of fierce opponents. Many beheld him thus exalted who would fain have kept him down; and the elevation was more delightful on this account. If we may so say, it cost God more to put him there than it would have done otherwise. To be on the throne, then, in spite of opposition, enemies numerous and strong, after many toils and tears, not only as a dignity but a triumph—this was a far greater and more blessed thing than if there had been little or no difficulty at all. Men do delight, and ever have delighted, in the overthrow of the wicked. There is no man, however good, who is not pleased that thieves and liars and murderers are found out and punished. Whatever commiseration we may have for their sufferings as men, we feel complacency in the fact that they do suffer. It is possible to cherish revenge, which is wrong; but it is also possible to rejoice without cherishing it, which is right. The sentiment is natural, whether the object on which it feeds be present or prospective. Let us not take a narrow view of this feeling. It is not rejoicing in suffering as such, but as suffering on particular accounts. Suffering in defence of right we honour. But suffering and shame brought on those who have trampled on all righteousness and goodness we rejoice in, and are right to do so. It is not a pitiful vengeance, but a right healthy moral sentiment. David's feasting in the presence of his enemies is a type of many feasts. But things worth having involve trouble and expense in the getting. You can attain to honour and joy only in "the presence of enemies." "Faith" is "a good fight," and Christian enterprise is a "wrestling with spiritual wickedness." Wherefore "anoint the shield," "take the sword of the Spirit," that ye "may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." (*A. J. Morris.*) *Feasting in presence of enemies*:—"Thou preparedst a table for me." I notice that all our commentators teach that there is a break here. A sheep at a table; that will not do, although the idea of feeding will do. Well, the kaleidoscope seems to have taken a turn. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." What does that mean? I somewhere met with an idea which has always stuck to me. I do not know what commentator it was in, for I cannot find it now; perhaps it was somebody whom I heard. In old warfare they had rather savage ways of retaliating upon their enemies. After the battle the victors had a feast, and, in order to enjoy the feast, they took their leading captives—the leading men of the opposing army whom they had vanquished, and bound them to pillars in the banqueting hall, and compelled them to look on while those whom they had meant to destroy sat and feasted royally and uproariously in their presence. It was a savage way of acting—to prepare a table and sit down and drink to the confusion of their enemies, and their princes and their captains chained to the pillars. It gave zest to the feast, did it not? Ah, there is a true idea in that. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." (*John M'Neill.*) *A table among enemies*:—I. First, THERE ARE TEMPTATIONS, commonly so called, which can be a trouble even when they have ceased to be a dread. Just when all is peace and glory there comes the ribald murmur of an evil thought, the haunting disquiet of some evil imagination. Or doubts, again, rise up at the most solemn moments, at some turning-point in our path. "This steep road cannot be right. The higher path of duty is a mistake. The view of uninterrupted splendour

which I have promised myself will never come ! The path leads nowhither ; it is but a sheep-track, beaten by the tramp of unenquiring generations. I am the slave of an imposture, the victim of a cunningly devised fable." Doubts are certainly among those that trouble us. And then there is the constant weakness, the weariness of the road, the faintness which makes us stumble, the distaste for prayer, the distractions which perplex us. He does not concern Himself with them ; He is busying Himself about me. The way lies through obstacles more and even greater than these. It is not His care to remove temptation, but to strengthen the tempted. He never promised to remove trouble ; but He has promised to make anxiety out of the question. He never promised to remove pain ; but He has promised to elevate it into a bearing, supporting cross. "He prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." II. AND WHAT IS THIS TABLE, so strange, so unexpected, prepared in the presence of enemies thirsting for my life ? Pre-eminently it speaks to a Christian of the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood. In a wider meaning it is our Holy Religion. It represents all those different ways and means of grace in which God strengthens us against temptation. If, then, we are to push our way through these obstacles, He would seem to say that above all things it is necessary that religion should preoccupy the soul ; it is the empty soul that is so mercilessly tormented. A man that has no principle, no settled religious beliefs, no settled religious obligations, who depends on his surroundings and companions, it is he who is so mercilessly tormented. And no less in "the table" do we trace a provision of strength. Over and over again Holy Scripture appeals to us with warning voice, "Be strong." God knows the strain which we have to undergo, the unhealthy atmosphere, the miasmatic plain, the poisonous swamps and jungles through which the path winds, and therefore He prepares a table of strength. What strength we might have if we made use of this table of religion ! We should find ourselves a source of strength to all around us. And yet again, the table is a feast of good things. There is the intense interest of religious life and religious work. Worldly men cannot understand it, simply because they have not thrown themselves into it. It would seem to be a fact that our enjoyment of everything is in direct proportion to the interest which we bestow upon it, and to the extent in which we devote ourselves to it. Even the very games and recreations of life are insipid when we cannot play them, or neglect to enter into them. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." See how joyful, how bright God is all around us in His marvellous works. Do not let us despise enthusiasms ; they carry us on. They are a table of delight prepared in the presence of our enemies. III. And as the angels came and ministered to Christ after His temptation, so THE ANOINTED HEAD AND THE REPLENISHED CUP SPEAK OF THE JOY AND GLADNESS WHICH WAIT ON THOSE WHO OVERCOME. There is the oil of joy and grace poured over our heads, which makes us prophets, priests, and kings of God to all those with whom we are brought into contact. And at the end there comes the full cup. Everything contributes to the store of wealth, and all things work together for good, because we love God. Life in all its changes, health, prosperity, affliction, all add to the great store of blessing, and God's mercy fills the cup of happiness to overflowing. (*W. C. E. Newbolt, M.A.*) **Thou anointest my head with oil.**—*The anointing* :—I. DAVID HAD BEEN ANOINTED TO KINGSHIP. All Christians are kings, even as all Christians are priests ; but kings only anointed not crowned, as they are priests ordained, not yet admitted to celestial ministries ; and though the ordination to priestly service be now the more prominent honour, it is not such as to distrust or overshadow the kingly name and destiny. II. DAVID HAD BEEN ANOINTED FROM ON HIGH. David's crown was a sure one, and surer than that already worn by Saul ; and so is every Christian's. God's purposes in providence and grace are sure as the seasons and the sun. The kingship of every believer rests not on his own might or wisdom, not on the counsels and plans of his fellow-men, but on the irreversible and sovereign grace of God. III. DAVID HAD BEEN ANOINTED TO PRESENT RULE, AS WELL AS FUTURE HONOUR. He had forthwith to rule himself as a preparation for ruling others. IV. DAVID WAS ANOINTED OF THE SPIRIT. With "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." V. DAVID WAS ANOINTED IN SECRET. The anointing of David was not a public act. VI. DAVID WAS ANOINTED WITH THE OIL OF JOY. Oil was a symbol of joy. "And oil to make his face to shine." Of Messiah it is said, "Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." (*John Stoughton, D.D.*) **My cup runneth over.**—*The wealth of life* :—The overflowing idea is everywhere.



I. OUR CUP OF NATURAL BLESSING IS NOT SIMPLY SUFFICING BUT REDUNDANT. We see this—1. In the beauty of creation as opposed to mere utility. The sad philosopher of antiquity confessed, "He hath made everything beautiful in his time"; and the poet of to-day rejoices, "All things have more than barren use." Some modern cynics have roundly abused nature, and tried hard to show the seamy side of the rainbow; but the loveliness and grandeur of things are too much for them, and the poet's vocation is not yet gone. 2. In the abundance of creation as opposed to mere sufficiency. "Thou preparest a table before me." And how richly is that table furnished. We have a school of political economists tormented by the dread of population outstripping the means of subsistence, and which is ever warning society against the awful peril. But how foolish are such fears, seeing we dwell in a world so rich and elastic. Let man be wise and good, and however thronged "the habitable part" of the earth, there shall be "no complaining." The legend tells us that in olden times the ear of wheat extended the whole length of the straw, and it was through the sin of man that the ears of corn spring as we see them now. Truly this legend reflects the truth at all times, that the exuberance of God has been marred by the folly of man. II. THE SUPERABUNDANCE OF OUR CUP OF SOCIAL BLESSING. Think of home, and all that means; and friendship; and philanthropy. And art, science, literature. Commerce is a whole vine in itself, and we gaze at its embarrassing lavishness with amazed delight. Surely, when the nations return to wisdom and virtue they shall no more be an hungered, but find the world their Father's house, with bread enough and to spare. And in those days, too, it shall no more be felt that the individual is impoverished by society. Now, we too often feel that the multitude is the enemy of the individual; that the increase of the number makes the struggle all the more bitter for each member. But really, society is the instrument of God for multiplying the world's riches and joy, and in the day when the human brotherhood shall dwell together in knowledge and love each shall serve all, and all each, until in the sublime reciprocity the land overflows with milk and honey. III. THE MUNIFICENCE OF GOD IS REVEALED TO THE UTTERMOST IN THE CUP OF SPIRITUAL BLESSING. The cup of salvation runs over. It was not the study of God just to save us, but to save us fully, overflowing. We see this—1. In the pardoning of sin. God does not forgive sin with measure and constraint, but graciously multiplies pardons. The overflowing cup is the sign of a grand welcome, of a cordial friendship, of a most hearty love. 2. In the sanctification of the soul. We are not merely saved by Christ from ruin, but into a surpassing perfection of life. The Psalmist prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." What is whiter than snow? We have white clouds, flowers, foam, shells; but in the whole realm of nature know nothing whiter than snow. But the human spirit aspires to a truthfulness, purity, and beauty beyond that of the physical universe, it pants to be whiter than snow; and this sublimest aspiration of our being is destined to attainment in Jesus Christ. "They are without fault before the throne of God." Here, at least, the actual reaches the ideal. How full and rich the Almighty grace! "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." 3. Our last illustration of the boundless love is the provision for the soul's satisfaction in Christ Jesus. History tells that an ancient king granted pardon to some criminals under sentence of death, but when these discharged malefactors applied for relief at the palace gates the king refused them, protesting, "I granted you life, but did not promise you bread." This is not the theory of the Gospel; Christ not only saves from destruction, but opens to the soul sources of rich strengthening and endless satisfaction. Annually when the ice breaks up in Russia the Czar goes in state to drink of the River Neva, and having drunk, it was long the custom for the Czar to return the cup to his attendants full of gold, but year by year the cup became so much larger that at length a stipulated sum was paid instead of the old largesse. But however large the vessel we bring to God, and however much it increases in capacity with the discipline of years, God shall still make it to overflow with that peace and love and joy which is better than rubies and much fine gold. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The overflowing cup*:—Every few years we have people critical of the thanksgiving proclamation. They say, "We have nothing to be thankful for. Commerce down; manufactures dull; commercial prospects blasted. Better have a day for fasting than a day for feasting." Indeed, have you nothing to be thankful for? Does your heart beat? Do your eyes see? Do your ears hear? Did you sleep last night? Are the glorious heavens above your head? Is the solid earth beneath your feet? Have you a Bible, a Christ, a proffered heaven? Ay, those of us who are the worst off have

more blessings than we appreciate, and "our cup runneth over." I. THANKSGIVING IN THE HOUSE. I just want to look around and see what God has been doing for you in your home. "Oh," you say, "our house is not so large now as the one we used to have." I answer, what of that? It is a great deal of trouble to keep a large house clean. Besides that, a small house is so cosy. Besides that, it is a bad thing for children to have a luxuriant starting. But I step into your parlour, and I find there the evidences of refinement, and culture, and friendship. I go on to the next room and step into your nursery, and I am greeted with the shout and laughter of your children. They romp; they hide; they clap their hands. Busy all day, without fatigues, they fall asleep chattering and wake up singing. And the little baby has its realm, waving its sceptre over the parental heart, and you look down in its wondering eyes and see whole worlds of promise there, and think to yourself, "those little hands will smooth my locks when they get grey, and those little feet will run for me when I am sick, and those eyes will weep for me when I am gone." Thank God to-day that upon your home has come the brightness of childhood, and drop a tear of grief for those who weep over a despoiled cradle and toys that never will be caught up again by little hands now still, alas! for ever. And I go into the dining-room, and I find you have bread enough and to spare; and into your library, and you have books to read, many of them, and of the best sort. Thank God for books—plenty of them—books to make you study, books to waft you into reverie, books to make you weep, books to make you laugh; books of travel, of anecdote, of memoir, of legend; books about insects, about birds, about shells, about everything. Books for the young, books for the old. "Oh," says some one, "I have not all these luxuries; I have not all these comforts of the parlour, of the nursery, of the dining-hall, of the library." But certainly you know something of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of that sweet, tender, joyous, triumphant word "home"! "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever"; and let each one clap his hands, and say for himself, "My cup runneth over."

II. I pass on now to look at THANKSGIVING IN THE HOVELS OF THE POOR. No banquet smoking on their table. Oh, it is hard to be hungry in a world with ripe orchards and luxuriant harvests and herds of cattle driven to the slaughter. You rich, remember these poor to-day, and help them to join in the thanksgiving of us all.

III. THANKSGIVING IN THE CHURCH. I know there are those who think the Church is a museum of antediluvian fossils. They think it did very well once, but it is behind the times. That is not your opinion. You love, first, your home, and next, your church. O ye descendants of the men who were hounded amid the Highlands of Scotland, and who fell at Bothwell Bridge; O ye sons and daughters of the men who came across wintry seas to build their log churches in the American wilderness; O ye sons and daughters of those who stood in the awful siege of Leyden, and shouted the martyrs' triumph in the horrors of the Brussels market-place; O ye descendants of the men whose garments were dyed in the wine-press of Saint Bartholomew Massacre; ye sons and daughters of the fire, what do you think to-day of a quiet Church, and a free pulpit, and a Gospel winged with mercy and salvation? What imperial edict forbids our convocation? What sword thirsts for our blood? What fires are kindled for our torture? None. Defended by the law, invited by the Gospel, baptized by the Spirit, we are here to-day free men of the state, free men of God. Let us give thanks. And let there be—IV. THANKSGIVING IN THE CITY—for good laws, just judges, quiet Sabbaths, noble churches, &c. V. THANKSGIVING IN THE NATION—for peace and prosperity, &c. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

*The overflowing cup*:—The Psalm culminates in this expression. It could only have been in reference to spiritual things that David could thus speak. I. SOME MEN'S CUPS NEVER RUN OVER. Because taken to the wrong source. Such are the cups held beneath the drippings of the world's leaky cisterns. Some cups are never filled, because the bearers of them suffer from the grievous disease of natural discontent. The heart is like the slough of despond, into which thousands of waggon loads of material were cast, and yet the slough did swallow up all, and was none the better. Some cups never run over, because their owners are envious. The green dragon is a very dangerous guest in any man's home. And unbelief is sure to prevent a man's cup running over. II. WHY DOES THE CUP RUN OVER? Because, being believers in Christ, we have in Him all things. Between here and heaven there is nothing we shall want but what God has supplied. Because the infinite God is ours. When do we feel this? In the answer of our prayers and expectations. The Lord has given you more than imagination pictured. When Henry the Eighth was proposing to marry Anne of Cleves, Holbein was sent to

paint her picture, with which Henry was charmed. But when he saw the original his judgment was very different, and he expressed disgust instead of affection. The painter had deceived him. No such flatteries can ever be paid to the Lord Jesus Christ. So beyond all conception of mind and heart is He. Sometimes the text is true of the Christian's joy. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Bounty should lead to charity*:—If God makes our cup to run over in His bounty we should make it to run over in our charity. And indeed, wherefore doth the Lord make our cup run over but that others should be refreshed by the droppings of the same. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *Outward blessings abused*:—The ways by which God's outward blessings are abused, are principally two. 1. Iniquity. 2. Vanity. They are abused when they are made serviceable and occasional unto any iniquity. I will give you some special instances for this—(1) When we make our plenty the ground of an idle and unprofitable life; to live without any calling and employment, as if Divine goodness in any kind were a discharge from all industry. (2) When we consecrate, nay, that word is not fit, when we embezzle, God's bounty and mercies to luxury and drunkenness. 3. A third sin is loftiness. 4. A fourth sin unto which God's plenty may be and is abused is carnal confidence. 5. A fifth sin is covetousness and love of the world. But I proceed to the second way wherein men do abuse the plenty of God's goodness to them, namely, to vanity; and that is twofold, either of—1. Feasting. 2. Apparelling. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.—*A good man's thoughts in his old age*:—The Psalm itself consists of two pictures—what we call “the shepherd,” and what we should not err in calling “the king.” Both have to do with character, spiritual character, relation to God. They may apply to other things, national or ecclesiastical, but here is their chief intent. The poem supposes the man who speaks to have spiritual life in him, and the good man thus utters his confidence in the protection and in the care of that God under whose loving fatherhood he has been brought on his way. In the second part of the Psalm we have another figure—a different sort of allegory altogether. It refers, perhaps, to a more advanced stage of the Christian life. I call this parable “the king.” And it reminds us of the “certain king who made a marriage supper for his son.” It tells of man made a partaker of the Divine nature, and coming into intimate communion with God. And all tells of the richness, variety, and depth of the soul's satisfactions in such communion. And then comes the good man's utterance of his subjective feelings after taking this review of life. Reasoning from the past to the future, he says, “Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice.” By just giving a little turn to the last expression of the text I see three things—1. Firm faith. “Shall follow me.” “Goodness and mercy.” These are just the two things into which God's beneficence, generally considered, naturally divides itself. Goodness to creatures; mercy to sinful creatures. An angel is the object of one; man of both. The good man says, “I have needed both; I have had both all my days, and surely they shall follow me all my days.” 2. There is also the idea of settled purpose. “Shall follow me.” By daily habits of devotion, by the culture of a child-like faith, by holy familiarity with Divine things, I will seem to myself to be constantly engaged in God's service. 3. Then comes the assurance of expectation and hope. “I will dwell in the house of the Lord.” We take the faith and feeling of the man to expand and enlarge, till they embrace the great and ultimate future of the life that is to be, and he says, “I feel that I have been led onwards to that. These capacities and affections of mine, the stirring of a spiritual life within me, were never made to find their perfection here. I carry within myself, in my own religious consciousness, a prophecy, an earnest of something greater than the life that now is.” 4. Observe the beautifulness and the blessedness of a Christian old age. Age is a thing that may be very beautiful. It is when “the hoary head is a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness”—when there are no marks upon the countenance of extinct volcanoes, dark shadows from wrought-out passions, impressions of darkness and crime, but when the life has been spent for God. It is, if I am not mistaken, Scorgal—the author of that little book *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*—takes a review of life, looks back upon its prominent events, its afflictions and its trials, and upon his inward experience, and ends all by saying, “I am this day such and such an age, and I bless God that ever I was born.” Voltaire does just the same thing as to the review, but with a totally different result. In one of his books you may find a review of his life. The querulous old man puts together all that he had gone through, finds it dark and disappointing, and concludes by



saying, "I am this day so and so, and I wish that I had never been born." There is the difference! "I thank God," says the one, "that ever I was born," because he can take the 23rd Psalm, and in the 23rd Psalm he can read the history of his inward life. And the other man, though he had great ability and great genius, and had a long and wonderful life, which, however, nobody would say, or pretend to say, that he spent it in walking with God, he says, "I wish that I had never been born." Poor man!—they smothered him with flowers and killed him with fame—and it came to this! And the last thought is, that the best way to be able to end life with an utterance like this is to begin it well. (*Thomas Binney.*)

*The believer's security and confidence.*—I. TO DAVID THE EVENTS OF LIFE WERE DISPLAYS OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY. To some, in view of David's life, this seems an exaggeration. Such an opinion must, however, be founded upon either erroneous or defective views of the nature of God's special providence, or on ignorance and misapprehension of the objects to which that providence is directed. God's special providence implies that he exercises a controlling influence over all our actions, they being to a certain extent determined as being the necessary effects of man's constitution and circumstances combined, and which God has formed, appointed, and arranged. He has always some definite object in view. If that object be to promote man's happiness, then it will follow that all the events of his life will tend, directly or indirectly, to that end. It is necessary to settle what happiness consists in, or at least what is the test of its existence and degree. In the constitution of things the decree of God has established an immutable connection between happiness and holiness, and that consequently the degree of holiness furnishes a certain test of the degree of happiness. Man's nature is in itself most unholy, entirely alienated from God, and devoted to sense and sin. How are they to be roused from lethargy and really impressed with Divine truths? Calamities and misfortunes are the means God uses. These are well fitted to make the truths of the existence and moral government of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, really effective truths. No doubt affliction often fails to produce permanent good results, but this fact only aggravates the man's condemnation. Even moral evils and sins may be made instrumental in the promotion of the same great objects. We do not palliate or excuse moral offences on the ground of the good account to which they may be turned, for this would be to act on the principle of "the end sanctifying the means." For if a man whose ordinary conduct is respectable has, through the force of hidden corruption, been led into any open and unquestionable violation of morality, it may, by the blessing of God, be made the means of producing a useful and salutary result, by rousing into action natural conscience, by inspiring suspicion and alarm, and by leading to serious conviction. Even to unconverted persons moral transgressions may be of great use in leading them to God. II. IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES, OR BY WHAT PERSONS, THIS STATEMENT MAY BE PROPERLY MADE. No one can expect goodness and mercy to follow him save in virtue of God's promises. It is a fearful doctrine, but clearly stated in Scripture with regard to many individuals of the human race, that, so far from "goodness and mercy following them all the days of their life," everything that He gives them seems only the more to estrange them from God and goodness. This is just a statement of a fact; and if such persons believe that the dispensations of God's providence with reference to them are intended to cause "goodness and mercy to follow them all the days of their life," or that they will in fact do so, they are labouring under a fatal delusion. Before, then, any person is entitled to assert, with reference to his own afflictions, that God does everything for the best, and to apply this as a ground of comfort and consolation to himself, he must not only love God, but know and be convinced that God loves him. It is really astonishing to see how very seldom, in a professing Christian country, this question is seriously entertained, and on what slight and trivial grounds men are contented to take it for granted that all is safe with them. No one loves God but a true Christian, because nothing will produce love to God but the belief of the Gospel; and of course, it is the belief of the Gospel that makes a man a Christian. (*W. Cunningham, D.D.*) *The evidence of things not seen.*—We cannot—no one can, not the profoundest philosopher—tell what life is, but we know that it is fed from without. And the higher the form of existence the more of external help it requires in order to its proper development. See this in plant life, in animal life, in human life. And this last needs most of all. And abundant supply is forthcoming for it, real, wholesome, beautiful satisfaction. In this last verse of the Psalm David gives utterance to a grand assurance and anticipation concerning the life that now is. He should not

want. Goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life. Hence what could he do but pour out his thankfulness unto the Lord, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the presence of all His people? He tells us that goodness and mercy are special marks of God's dealings with men. Let us think of them. I. GOODNESS. "Good" and "God" in Anglo-Saxon are the same word. Goodness or Godness, an element of God's nature. "There is none good but One," said Jesus, "that is God." It is simply impossible for Him ever to decree or wish to do anything evil. Ill will or bad purpose on His part is inconceivable. II. MERCY. This also is characteristic of the Divine relation to man. In giving this emphatic testimony to the nobleness of mercy David does but voice the dearest assurances of the human heart concerning the omnipotence of love. God is good, and therefore He must be merciful. He could not else be good. He has bound Himself by His own promise to be merciful and forgiving. Hence it is said, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to," &c. No wonder, then, that David felt so secure when thinking of the future. (*George Bainton.*) *Goodness and mercy*:—This text refers to the time when Absalom had risen in rebellion, and David had been driven to seek refuge in Mahanaim. Retribution had been following on his track with feet shod with wool, and he was now only reaping what he had sown in an alienated people and a rebellious son. But the light of heaven shone through the darkness in his soul, for at the same time he felt himself compassed about with a sense of deliverance. Goodness and mercy were following him to make reparation for his evil days. God gave him back the faith of his childhood. The idea is a beautiful one, the idea of God's mercy outrunning our necessities; but in our deeper moods we feel we need it to follow us. We need God for our yesterdays as much as for our to-morrows, for our reward as much as for our leader. Not as an American Indian pursuing his enemy to the death; not like an avenger of blood, in his awful vendetta, on the track of the manslayer: but as a healer of the wounds we have inflicted He comes, to neutralise the consequence of our folly, ignorance, and sin; to separate us from the debasing associations of sin, and to give us a sense of recovered freedom. The consequences of our sins may be transformed into sources of joy and fruitfulness by the precious alchemy of grace. The disappointments of earth may become the appointments of heaven. To us goodness and mercy are no abstract qualities; we have them personified in God's Son. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The goodness of God following man*:—I. THE BLESSINGS HERE ANTICIPATED. "Goodness and mercy." 1. Goodness. The goodness of God is a most delightful and animating theme; it touches every chord of the Christian's heart. "How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for the children of men." 2. Mercy. Pardonning mercy. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity," &c. Protecting mercy. The good man has his difficulties and dangers. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance," &c. Sustaining mercy. Amid holy enterprises, spiritual conflicts, arduous duties, severe afflictions, trying bereavements, God has sustained His saints. Supplying mercy. "My God shall supply all your need out of His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." But we are prone to look on the dark side of His providence, and to ask, with the murmuring Israelites, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" II. THE MANNER OF ITS CONVEYANCE. "Shall follow me." As the mother's eye and hand follow her little one as he makes his first wobbling attempt to toddle alone; as the needle follows the lodestone; as the water out of the rock followed the Israelites through the desert; as the pillar of glory went with them by night and by day: so goodness and mercy shall follow the faithful, in the closet, in the family, in the church, in the world. It shall follow incessantly, supply fully, solace richly, sustain powerfully, pass with him through the Jordan, and enter with him the bright portals of glory. Here we have—1. The continuance of it. All the days of my life—that is, all my life long—even to the last. 2. The certainty of it. "Surely," &c. "Hath He promised, and shall He not bring it to pass?" As sure as you need it, you shall have it; as sure as you require it, you shall realise it. It shall come seasonably at the best time, in the wisest manner, and from the most unexpected quarter. Its certainty is founded upon the Divine existence; its communication upon Divine veracity; its possession is the fruit of immutable, unwavering, undying love. "Surely," &c. III. THE CONSUMMATION OF IT. "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." CONCLUSION—1. Learn to be grateful. Beware of sinking into the vortex of selfishness, and burying your mercies in the grave of forgetfulness. 2. Learn to be trustful.

3. Learn to be active. If you have the pledge that "goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life," should not those days be spent for the glory of Him—whose you are, and whom you serve? Work while it is day. (*John Woodcock.*) *Behind and before*:—The Psalmist is looking at his yesterdays. He is gazing at the panorama of his past life. You know how sometimes we come to a corner of the road in the journey of life which brings the whole of our past way vividly before us. Perhaps we are laid aside by sickness, and in the time of seclusion the memory wanders back and re-treads the path of the years. Or maybe we are standing by the open grave of a comrade whose path has run close by our own; our memory tugs us backward, and our past life opens out before us in marvellous clearness and intensity. Or sometimes a little commonplace incident unlocks the doors of the past, and in vivid recollection we pass through all its rooms. Now, when we are compelled to look back at the past of our life, how does it look? Gazed at with unprejudiced vision, with nothing to make us morally colour-blind, how does it all appear? To the Psalmist, as he recalled the way he had come, it appeared to be one long unbroken path of failure and sin. His path was marked as the path of a snail or a slug over some tender plant, which leaves behind it the slime of its own passage. The retrospect oppressed him—yesterday became the burden of to-day. And is not that so with all who seriously think, with all who solemnly estimate the tenour and quality of their days? The retrospect becomes oppressive; they cannot comfortably recount the detailed stories of their lives. There are some whose burden is to-morrow. Their fear and their anxiety centre on the morrow. They want an angel to go before them to prepare their way. But I think that where there is one soul burdened with the fear of to-morrow, there are many burdened with the fear of yesterday. The burden of conscience never comes from to-morrow; it is rolled up from our yesterdays. It is not prospect, but retrospect, that lays the heaviest weight on the heart. And now to a soul so oppressed there comes this beautiful thought of God contained in my text, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me." Goodness and mercy shall follow me, shall come on after me and wipe away that slimy track. I think that is a very gracious and inspiring thought. A God in our rear. A Father coming up behind. Goodness and mercy following us. You have seen the sands at a popular watering-place cut and dug by a thousand hands and feet, littered with paper and all kinds of refuse, and befouled in a hundred ways. Then rolls up the tide, and the refuse is buried in its bosom, and all the unevennesses are smoothed away. It is even so with those sands of time, the sands of past years, in which we have left the track of our sins; the tidal waves of Divine goodness and mercy roll up, and the unseemly track may be smoothed away. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me." Suppose it had been, "Justice shall follow me," avenging justice, cold unsympathetic law. If justice were to follow even the best of us, our hearts would shake with fear. It is not even "Righteousness shall follow me," but goodness. There is something rich in the very word. "Goodness shall follow me," and mercy. Grapes with the bloom on. Goodness in surpassing sweetness and beauty. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Can you think of anything fitter in expression, anything that could more tenderly unfold the nature of the God who comes in the rear of our life? "I have blotted them out like a thick cloud." Do you see the force of the figure? You are going along the dry and glaring road, and you stir up the dust, and it flies like a thick cloud in your rear. And God says that as we go along the way of life we stir up clouds of sin, and He blots them out. As John Bunyan says, He sprinkles upon it the water of grace, and the dust is laid. Is not this just what we all need? But there is something more than this. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me" not only to blot out our sins, but to gather up the fragments of our goodness. We want a God in our rear who will pick up the fragments—bits of good resolution, stray thoughts, stray prayers, beginnings of heroism, little kindnesses, all the broken bits of goodness, all the mites, the forgotten jewels—to gather all the fragments so that nothing be lost. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me," and shall miss nothing; the God who follows us is "like unto a woman, who lost one piece of silver, and who lit a candle and swept the house and sought diligently till she found it." It was this great conception of a good and merciful God in the rear which converted a gloomy retrospect into a glorious hope. Our Father is behind us, goodness and mercy follow us; let us leave our yesterdays trustfully to Him. But now in the second part of my text the Psalmist turns himself round from retrospect to prospect. He turns from a con-



templation of the past to a contemplation of the future. What is his idea of futurity? "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Well, you say, there is nothing peculiarly glorious or definite about the conception. Stay a little. Before you can estimate the quality of any one's heaven you must know their condition on earth. Our hopes about to-morrow are very largely shaped and coloured by our condition to-day. Look at the Psalmist's position. When this Psalm was composed he was a wanderer, exiled from the peace and blessedness of his own home. All our conceptions of the future are formed in a similar way. No two of us have precisely the same conception. The special bliss we anticipate is shaped out of our special burden now. Go down to our coast and speak to some old fisherman's wife, whose husband and sons have all been lost in the deep, and ask her what in her loneliness is her conception of heaven, and would you wonder if to her one of the pre-eminent glories of the place is this, "There shall be no more sea"? Go to some invalid who is held by some chronic disease, ask her what is her conception of heaven, and would you wonder if to her one of the great glories of the place is this, "There shall be no more pain"? And all the anticipations are true. Every man's present need discovers one of the glories of the future. It takes all our different needs to discover the glory and sufficiency of the things prepared for us. We all need this tug of the future, the tug of the days that are to be. We can only get out of the deep ruts of to-day by the powerful tug of to-morrow. Life grows heavy and stagnant when to-morrow ceases to pull, when the "for ever" has lost its power. Present burdens grow light in the strength of the "for ever." Present homelessness can be almost cheerfully endured when in its coldness the Psalmist can sing, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (*J. Jowett, M.A.*)

*Goodness and mercy behind us:*—The ugly things that are lying in wait for us sometimes, when we are wholly at rest and quiet, like ambuscades towards which, all blindly, gay troopers ride, carolling love-ditties or exchanging jests, and are suddenly cut down. How, sometimes, ugly things have lurked in our path, big with sorrow for us, that could have been so easily avoided, and would have been had we only known. But we knew not, we suspected not, and were allowed to go forward lightly, as though we were going to receive a boon instead of a crushing blow. Occasionally, indeed, we are visited and disturbed before some tragic misfortune with an unaccountable anticipation of evil to which we refuse to listen, shaking it off determinedly, and thrusting it from us, and it has seemed to us afterwards as if a guardian angel had been trying to save us, and, striving in vain, had been obliged to leave us to our fate. But in the case of each of us, how close we have often been, doubtless, without perceiving it, to calamities which yet were spared us; that drew very nigh while we heard no sound of their footfall beside us, and all but touching us, passed harmlessly by. And may we not say that goodness and mercy are frequently following us to our salvation from threatening mischief—in the truer thoughts, the better feelings, that start up behind our frequent false inclinations, and prevail against them, in the wiser mind that presently awakes to arrest and scatter the foolish; in the wholesomer heart that rises to check the unhealthy. From what degradation we have been snatched once and again upon the brink of which we were tottering; as we lingered and leaned ready to slide, there was that from within which laid hold on and drew us back. Or suppose that in certain moods of ours, in certain moments of passion or soul-relaxation, opportunity had occurred—as with some in like moods and moments it has occurred to their undoing, to their headlong plunge into baseness or crime—how different matters might have been with us to-day! How much of what would be termed our virtue seems to us, when we reflect, to have been but a providential hindering of our inclination towards, and our ripeness for, what would have been the very opposite of virtue! We have been guarded and hedged in to preservation from ourselves. Can you not say, on looking back, that here and there, in this and that crisis, it was as though God had been our rearward, warding off from us devastation and havoc that threatened? True, every day bears upon it the fruit of yesterday's sowing, yet have we not felt, when enduring the judgment of some previous mistake or misdeed, that the judgment was tempered with mercy—that it is not so severe as it might have been expected to be? Yes, while the iniquities and inequities of the past are laid upon us, we are constrained to acknowledge often that they might well have burdened us more heavily than they do. They are not upon us to the uttermost; there are withholdings—there are abatements, as though a gracious power were keeping them back from us in part. (*S. A. Tipple.*)

*God following His people:*—That God may follow His people with these many ways, either in

respect of—1. His intention and affection. 2. His assistance and preservation. 3. His concurrence and augmentation. 4. Evidence and manifestation. (*O. Sedgwick, B.D.*) *The pilgrim's rearguard, goodness and mercy* :—John Condor, afterwards D.D., was born at Wimple, in Cambridgeshire, 3rd June 1714. His grandfather, Richard Condor, kissed him, and with tears in his eyes, said, "Who knows what sad days these little eyes are likely to see?" Dr. Condor remarked, upon mentioning the above circumstances, "These eyes have, for more than sixty years, seen nothing but goodness and mercy follow me and the Churches of Christ even to this day." *Goodness and mercy following to repair* :—Goodness and mercy pursues to repair the ravages sin has wrought. Nature follows the footsteps of man, and strives to obliterate the ravages she causes. The blasted rocks that have been exposed on the hillside she soon plants with the self-sown trees and shrubs and hides their deformity. The stone wall which in its newness and rawness looks such a discordant feature in the landscape she subdues by the grey colouring and soft tenderness of her lichens and mosses into beautiful harmony with surrounding scenery. Similarly do goodness and mercy work; but they are now no longer abstract qualities, for they have been personified in the Son of Man. *Goodness and mercy* :—I. At once these words "GOODNESS AND MERCY" ATTRACT OUR ATTENTION. It was "goodness and mercy" that led us first out of the fold, with an aim and object in life. There was "goodness and mercy" in that shelter from the noontide heat. But now it is "goodness and mercy" all the days of my life. We owe a good deal to the grace that comes after; the grace that only gives us the wish to do what is right, not only the grace that starts us and helps us in what is right, but also the grace which helps us to finish. Here is that striking characteristic of the love of God Almighty which comes out in all His dealings with us, namely, its completeness. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Creative love, which placed man in the world, did not exhaust the goodness of God towards us: Redemptive love met him when he fell. And as if Redemptive love itself were not sufficient, Sanctifying love came in to fill up where Redemptive love seemed to lack. So it is with each single soul. God completes His work. And, indeed, we all need this following grace, this persistent love of God. Think how much misery and trouble come to us from past sins, attacking the heels of life. How many would faint and fail if God's grace did not follow them! "The glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward" (Isa. lviii. 8). "Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us." II. "AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER." It is your hope and desire, and, please God, it will be your privilege, to dwell much in the house of the Lord. You will have frequently to go there, to plead the great Sacrifice. Day by day you will have to go into the Holy Place to offer the incense. It will be yours to kindle the lamp of a never-ceasing devotion, to place the Eucharistic Shewbread before the Lord. Make your life all temple, all part of the *ῥημέσις*, the sacred enclosure. Enlarge it towards the east, where we look for our Saviour's coming. Let it be a life of patient witness for God. Enlarge it towards the west, where the sun of our life is gently dipping towards the grave, in a life of preparedness. Enlarge it towards the north, on the frontier of Satan. Enlarge it towards the sunny south; take in many a piece of ground which is now covered by worldly occupations, business, or pleasure. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This should be our aim, to attain to the realisation of the life hid with Christ in God; and to this God is separating us off, that our sojourn with Him may be eternal. III. "THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER." The days are coming when God Himself will measure the temple, His house, to see who are His, and who shall dwell in His tabernacle. It is the permanence of heaven that is one of its greatest joys in prospect. It is an abiding place, a mansion. There is no restoring there, no troubling there; no dark misty shade of death to chill the sunlight of the road. (*W. C. E. Newbolt, M.A.*) I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.—*The Church as a home* :—This text simply means, "I will have a home in the house of the Lord for ever." Whatever temple or church or chapel stands to us for a centre or rallying-place of our religious belief and life, we should cherish it as a sort of other home. Churches stand for the common brotherhood of all, and for kindness and helpfulness to all. What should be our relation to these Churches? A home that all value. We know what that means. We don't sit there all our time, but from thence we go forth to toil and struggle in the world. Then we return for life's innermost peace and friendliness, reposefulness, and renewal. Just so it is when we make the Church into a home—a "dwelling-place," to use the Psalmist's words. Thither we go for the

inspiration, fellowship, and renewal of that deeper life in us; thither we go as children gathering about the feet of the Great Father, to feel His presence and to feel it altogether, and thence we go forth to do our busiest and highest part in the world. That is the use of the Church. Not to be always in it. That was the old monkish idea. They desired to make it a permanent sacred enclosure, where God's saints might live out of the common world and so keep pure amid never-ceasing worship, or as nearly so as might be. But Christ teaches us a nobler idea, the idea of home and of active life in the world, and doing its work and busy in its interests; and religion, with a constant spirit setting up this other home of prayer and worship where we feel together peace, rest, refreshment, a common fellowship to the infinite life, and brotherhood to each other. So we renew life at the best part of it. Is it not true that the busier one's life and the more even its resting times are crowded with great interests, attractions, and engagements, the more is it necessary, in order to give the deeper, inner life a chance, to make a definite time and place for its development among life's regular engagements and duties? That is what you do by setting yourselves to have a church-home. Some people do not know what pleasure there is even in the mere joining with others in the church. It may not be much they may be able to do or to give, but their sympathy, their encouragement openly declared, towards those who are struggling to keep some little church-home going, is in itself a help. Any one who thus joins in that fellowship of religious life gives a certain added strength and cheer to the whole body. Every one who thus says to some little group of worshippers, "I am not much, but such as I am I am with you," helps them more than can be figured in any statistics. Himself!—That is the help I plead for, the help to oneself and the help to one's fellow-creatures. Life needs this closer cohesion in its great thoughts and aims, this quiet home-coming, as it were, of the single worshipper, this sense of having an anchorage in the midst of the wide, rushing stream of life. (*Brooke Herford.*) *The Christian's dwelling-place*.—This "house of the Lord," observe, is on the other side of "the valley of the shadow of death"; and therefore it is just a description of heaven; and if the character of a shepherd sets forth the conduct of God towards His people while in this world, the character of a monarch sets forth His character towards them in the world to come. 1. THE SCENE REFERRED TO. "The house of the Lord." 1. Because it is the scene of His familiar glory. 2. Because it is the temple of His worship. 3. As it is the palace of His kingdom. 4. As it is the abode of His family. II. THE ASSURANCE EXPRESSED BY THE PSALMIST. "I will dwell in it." 1. This language implies the assurance, on his part, of the existence of a state of future blessedness. Reason says there must be such a state; conscience says there is such a state. Hence men often lull their conscience; but there it is—they cannot destroy it, and ever and anon conscience speaks like thunder. Like some chemical characters, in certain temperatures they are illegible; but raise the temperature and they appear in all their reality. But apart from these considerations, let us come to the revelation of the Bible. Jesus taught immortality: no one taught it as He did; no one preached it as He preached it. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." 2. The extent of the Psalmist's assurance. He says, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." He only sojourned in it here. Man is never satisfied here. There is quite enough here for the satisfaction of the animal; and the mere animal lives here in contentment, and takes its fill of happiness for its little inch of time. But not so man: man is a rational being. If he were a mere intellectual being, and nothing more, then he might dwell here. But man is not a mere intellectual being; he is a moral being, a spiritual being, and therefore he cannot dwell here. "But in the house of the Lord," says David, "I will dwell for ever." "I shall have enough there." 3. The Psalmist's strong confidence of dwelling there "for ever." This confidence rests in the promise of God, the finished work of the Redeemer and the sealing of the Holy Ghost. Let this prospect reconcile us in the midst of all affliction, if we be Christians, and let us prepare for that dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever. (*Joseph E. Beaumont, M.D.*) *The earthly and the heavenly sanctuary*.—I. THE CHURCH BELOW. This leads us to speak of the Sabbath, when the church is most resorted to. The solemn setting apart of places for divine worship is not of human device, but possesses all the sanctions which can be derived from the known will of our Creator. And thus when we assemble ourselves in the church we bring ourselves into the position in which God hath declared that by those who seek acquaintance with Himself He shall be found, and we are looking in the channels



through which it is especially promised. II. THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN. But St. John says there is no temple in heaven. But what does that show but that men will be so changed there that churches such as we have known here will not be needed? You could not draw a richer picture of a regenerated earth than by just supposing such an extension of its Sabbaths as alone would render safe the removal of its churches. (*Henry Melvill, B.D.*) *God's house the home of our hearts:*—Is our Father's house so unwelcome and dreary a place that there can be any cause for keeping outside as long as the winds are gentle and the skies bright, and only going in when the rain comes and the clouds of night hang heavily in the heavens? Thank God, He does not refuse to let us in when we come to Him as our refuge in time of trouble; but it would surely be a better thing that He should be our "dwelling-place," the home of our hearts, when our joy is perfect, and not merely the asylum of our wretchedness. (*R. W. Dale.*)

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### PSALM XXIV.

VERS. 1, 2. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*—*The earth the Lord's:*—So the Psalmist in this place speaks of the Divine sovereignty and of the Divine purpose and programme. The Divine sovereignty—the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. God stretches out His sceptre over all places, all peoples, all events. However you parcel the earth out, He is the great Landlord and the Sovereign Ruler doing according to His will amongst the inhabitants of the earth. And the Psalmist tells us in this place on what this rests. God created it, and He sustains it. What a great deal you see in the world that your ancestors did not see, and what a great deal your children will see in it that you do not see! It is a mysterious world, with the fulness thereof. How there is wrapped up in the world unknown possibilities to be manifested in due season. When God created the world He did not leave it; He lives in the midst of the splendour He first created. He is evermore active in all the things of nature and of history. You build a palace, and it comes to ruin, but the earth never comes to ruin. You never have to put an iron band round the firmament to hold up the dome as they have put an iron band upon the dome of St. Peter's at Rome. Now, the Psalmist here tells how God seeks to accomplish His great purpose in the world that He created, the world that He maintains, the world that He redeemed. He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. What is that? That God, who is the Sovereign of this world, has a great purpose in its government, and He seeks to accomplish that purpose through endless mutability and conflict. Now, you see the very same thing when you look into nature. God has made this world in exactly the same way, and the tangible world, the planet itself, how has it come to pass? He called forth His Spirit, and His Spirit moved on the face of the waters. Movement, you see. So it was in that strange old world, out of movement, mutability, catastrophe, out of these seas and floods, that this lovely earth arose, as the Greeks fabled that Venus arose out of the foam of the sea. Why, you know the history of your planet now pretty well. You know, your fathers, when they wanted to explain the configuration of this planet, always used to talk about the flood and the deluge. Oh! the deluge explained a lot. But you know a great deal better. You have studied geology since then. Nowadays you do not talk about Noah's deluge having made the planet what it is. You push it a great deal further back than that. For all that went on in these revolutions have left their signs on the rocks. What terrific floods, what mighty deluges, what burnings, what ages of frost and glaciers, and through all that God never lost sight of His final purpose to make this planet into what you see it to-day—music, colour, fragrance—a great and delightful theatre of intellectual and spiritual life. He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods, and out of movement, unsettlement, change, it arose, the lovely planet that you see it to-day. And mind, it is always going on just the same to-day. One would think sometimes, to look at the earth, that it was asleep. But make no mistake about that. The one thing nature never will stand is immovability. She won't tolerate stagnation. They say that sometimes in the Pacific they have periods of absolute calm, and in a few days the very sea begins to rot, and the stench is insuffer-

able. Nature won't stand it, she is full of unsettlement, full of movement, full of catastrophe. That is the way you keep the ocean pure, the atmosphere sweet, and the earth full of vitality. Now, I want to say to you that that is all just as true in the history of ourselves. If you will look down the history you will find that God has ever been active in the midst of the nations, always overturning that He may introduce a civilisation that is a shade better than the civilisation that preceded it. You never can make a nation fixed and permanent. The world from the beginning amongst the nations has been in a state of unrestfulness and changefulness. But I believe there never has been a change in this world but it has been for the better. Mind you, it often seems to a careless eye as if the world were going back, but whenever the critical period comes the best is always on the top. You go back in history to the great conflict, say, between the Greeks and Orientals, when there seemed a time that the Oriental world was likely to swamp Europe, when it was likely to destroy the civilisation of Greece, which was the promise of all future civilisations. But when the critical battle came the Greek was master of the situation. It was just the same again when you come to the great conflicts between the Romans and the Phœnicians. As you know perfectly well, there seemed a day when the Phœnician, with his dark superstitions, his terrible practices, was going to triumph; but when the ultimate time came, when the final battle was fought, the Roman was at the top, with his wiser, healthier, and nobler conceptions, ideals, and strivings. It was just the same again a little later when Mohammedanism came into contact with Europe, and the Moor was at the very gate of Vienna. It seemed as if the inferior civilisation was going to swamp the nobler, but God, who sat upon the face of the waters, said, "Hitherto and no further," and Mohammedanism was turned back, and it has been going back ever since. It has stopped a bit at Constantinople, but it will have to go. God has not made this world to go backwards. He has made it on the principle of a sure but oftentimes obscure development. Mind, I confess it looks as if it were not so. It seems sometimes as if we made a great deal of movement for positive retrogression. It looks so until we think about it. The world keeps going to pieces continually, and you never get anything fixed. But I am not going to lose sight of the fact that in the midst of instabilities and revolutions God is always quietly present. Always His end is to make men and nations pure and perfect. He has done it in the past; He will do it still. Why, you know well enough, in the fifth century—was it in the fifth or sixth?—a few fishermen laid the foundations of Venice in the slime of the lagoons. These men, with a few sticks and stones, began the creation, and as time went on there grew out of this slender and rude beginning the city of solemn temples, gorgeous palaces, the city of great painters, sculptors, and poets. And they built it out of the seas and established it upon the floods—the ideal city, the city dear to all lovers of the perfect. A few fishermen, in the first century, under the direction of the Master Builder, laid the foundations of a new world in the modern rottenness of the old civilisations, and now for 1900 years another building has been going on, the Church of Christ, the City of God, the Spiritual Venice. And mind, there is not a single movement in this world but aids it. There is no revolution but puts another bit of marble into it. He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods, and I can stand and see the whole world going to pieces with the utmost tranquillity, because I know that the destructive is also the constructive, and God never destroys unless He is going to build in its place something that is larger and more rational and more perfect. And all this is true of the individual life. Prepare yourselves for it. Just look at your lives. They have been one course of unsettlement, and it will be so until that man in white comes and reads over you that we never continue in one state. That is the way with us here. People imagine sometimes that they have got things pretty fairly square, that they have got things on a good basis, and that they are going to have a nice, tranquil time of it. Not a bit of it. He has built it upon the seas and founded it upon the floods. He will turn it over directly. You may be sure of that. When people marry and settle down, you sometimes hear people say, "Oh! they are married and settled now." You fancy you have got things into shape. You don't know where the next change is to come from. But it will come. There is no settlement; but mind this, every time God unsettles you it is for a great moral end. There ought to be no change in your life which does not leave you stronger and purer. So look up, the world is not purposeless: no man's life is a chaos. With endless variation, contrast, conflict, and catastrophe God is with us, and He will bring it out well at last, because when I get to the last page of the Book I read, "And there shall be no

more sea." (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *God's mundane property and man's moral obligation*.—I. HIS PROPERTY. 1. Its extent. The earth and its fulness (ver. 1). 2. Its foundation—creatorship. "He hath founded it," &c. (ver. 2). II. MAN'S MORAL OBLIGATION. 1. It urges him to be just. "Will a man rob God?" 2. To be humble. 3. To be thankful. It is God that has given us ourselves, with all our capacities and means of improvement and of pleasure. 4. To be acquiescent. God has a right to do what He likes with His own. Let the text be written on our hearts. It is engraved on the front of the Royal Exchange, but how few pause to read it, and fewer still ponder it in their hearts. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The earth and its fulness*.—There was a time when every separate department of nature was supposed to have a separate deity ruling over it. Every nation, every district, every sphere of life, every profession, every trade had a god of its own. There was a time when each race and tribe acknowledged no god but one. Then there comes the conviction that the Power which all are in some form seeking after is one and the same everywhere. We never can pass from His dominions. I. THE DIVINE PRESENCE IN THE WORLD. It is His power and His presence which we behold around us. He hath created and preserveth all. The universe is itself a manifestation of Him; it is His garment, it is illuminated and aglow with the Divine presence. As with the earth, so with its fulness. Its products are irradiated with a heavenly glory. They, too, come from Him who is wise in counsel and excellent in working. The earth is given to the sons of men, that it may be subdued and cultivated, that its boundless treasures may be sought out and developed. There is no doubt a wrong way as well as a right way of availing ourselves of them. II. ALL THINGS GOD'S GOOD GIFTS. If this can be said of meats and drinks, how much more may it be said of the manifold gifts with which the earth is ripe; the means placed at our disposal for the amelioration of human suffering, the lessening of toil, the advancement of knowledge, the increase of well-being in every shape and form. There was recently brought to light in Cornwall an old picture of our blessed Lord, in which His precious blood is represented as flowing over the various implements of industry—the reaping-hook, the scythe, the shuttle, the cart—implying that by His incarnation all human labour has been sanctified, that everything wherewith we carry on the work of the home, or of the world, is cleansed and consecrated through the life and death of Christ; that in Him all things are gathered together in one, and are made meet to be laid upon the altar of God. (*P. M'Adam Muir, D.D.*) *God's claims upon men*.—There is a strong tendency in the present day to forget the immanence of God in creation. We do well to emphasise the constant dependence of the universe upon the preserving power of God. The Psalmist was wiser than the wisest atheistical philosopher when he declared that the earth is the Lord's, for He hath founded it. The more we learn of the Creator and His works the more must we realise His infinite wisdom and almighty power. They tell us that the propositions of the evolutionist, if true, obviate all necessity for a personal Creator. But there must have been a great creative plan or this universe could not have come into being, and behind that plan there must have been an Omniscient Personal Intelligence. To what extent have men realised, and do men realise to-day, the conception of the text? How far have they grasped the thought that the earth is the Lord's and they are His stewards? The Jew was vividly reminded of the truth by that strange institution, the "Year of Jubilee." It served to remind the whole nation that "Jehovah was the Supreme Landlord under whom their tenure was held." The Psalmist goes a step further when he declares not only that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, but also "the world and they that dwell therein." Not merely because we are created beings do we belong to God. We have realised an immeasurably higher claim upon our service. It is created by His "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,"—in a word, by the mercies of Calvary. How many of you thus recognise God's claim upon you in this definite manner? (*Henry S. Lunn, M.D.*) *The earth is the Lord's*.—The best of God's gifts are often those which are least valued. It is the same with truths as it is with things. Whenever a truth becomes very common, whenever, that is to say, it is put by Divine Providence into the minds of all, we begin to neglect it, and to forget that God should be praised for it. To one of these old and familiar, yet pre-eminently useful, truths attention is now directed. From the earliest dawn of our reason we were taught that God made us, that a Wise and Holy Being who loves us was our Creator and the Author of all that exists, and what we were taught we believed, and still believe. But while we may both know and believe this truth, nothing is more likely than that, owing to its



very commonness and our familiarity with it, we may realise most inadequately the worth of it, and feel very little of that gratitude to God for the revelation of it which we ought to feel. It is not yet a truth known to all the peoples of the earth. It is not a truth which any man, if left to himself, would be sure or even likely to find out. Great men, giants in the intellectual world, have failed to attain to a clear knowledge of God as the alone Creator and Lord of nature. He who believes in God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe can be neither atheist, materialist, or pantheist. The faith in God as the Creator is the necessary basis of all higher spiritual faith.

1. The world being recognised as the work and manifestation of God is thereby invested with a deep religious awe, a solemn religious significance.
2. It is a source of pure and holy joy from which we may draw whenever we look upon anything in nature that is fair and well-fitted to fulfil the end of its creation.
3. By thus sending men to nature as well as Scripture for their religion our text tends to give breadth and freedom to the religious character.
4. Only through realising our relation to nature can we realise our relation to God Himself. We owe all to God, and nothing is our own. (*Robert Flint, D.D.*)

*The truth of Divine providence*.—1. Though this is generally acknowledged in principle, it is departed from in practice. Only casual and transient thought is given to the never-ceasing care and kindness of Divine providence.

2. All the children of God have, in successive ages, proclaimed and deeply felt the truth of the providence of God. Many instances might be adduced from the lives and declarations of the patriarchs to prove that whether in prosperity or adversity the sense of God's providence was ever present, and His right of possession and disposal ever uppermost in their minds.
3. Practical reflections. The business of commercial life tends to corrupt the mind and the affections, to withdraw them from the Creator and to concentrate them on the creature. We learn the duty of gratitude for all those blessings which out of that fulness He has showered on us. Since the world and its fulness is God's and not ours, as He can give so He can take away. As God has distributed to us some part of the world's fulness, for the use and abuse of our trust we are responsible to Him. The text further declares that not only the "earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," but also "they that dwell therein." "All souls are Mine," saith the Lord. (*Henry Clissold, M.A.*)

*The merchants of Britain*.—I. OF THE ADVANTAGES OF COMMERCE.

1. How vast it is. Its standard is planted upon the Andes and the Himalayas. The great Pacific and Atlantic seas are beaten white by our ships. From the ghauts of Malabar to the sands of Coromandel, from the steppes of the Cossack to the wilds of the Arab, from the Thames and the Mersey to the Mississippi and the Missouri, the commerce of Britain has extended its influence.
2. This great commercial power has done some good. It has opened up new channels of intercourse with mankind. It has created links of sympathy and bonds of union where all was severance and estrangement before.
3. It has gathered round it great homage and éclat.
4. It is very successful.
5. Of great importance to the State.
6. Must ever be associated with agricultural power.
7. Is one of the greatest securities against war.

II. ITS PERILS.

1. Avarice.
2. Considering everything from the trade point of view.
3. Absorbing care.
4. Reckless speculation.
5. Pride.
6. Forgetfulness of God.

III. ITS RESPONSIBILITIES.

1. Merchants should acknowledge God.
2. Seek to extend His kingdom.
3. Remember they are but stewards of their wealth.
4. Pity the poor.
5. Spread the Gospel.

(*J. Cumming, D.D.*)

*The religiousness of secular learning*.—This title is not a happy one. "Religiousness" seems to indicate, according to the conventional usage, a flimsy, fussy attention to the externals of religion, rather than a participation in the essential spirit of it. By the use of the adjective "secular" you might suppose I draw the usual broad distinction between things sacred and profane. My question is this, What of religion—of the religious spirit—is there about that which is usually called secular learning? By all other kinds of knowledge than the theological? When a man is studying languages, literature, or science, what is the attitude of the soul towards God? My doctrine is founded upon the principle asserted in the text. "The fulness," that is, all which makes it up, every particle and grain of which it is composed. All things are directly related to God as effects are to their cause, as phenomena to their basis, substance, or reality. They exist in Him and by Him.

1. All secular learning is directly or indirectly religious, because it directly or indirectly brings us into contact with the mind of God as manifested in His works. When you have learned a fact in nature you have learned a thought of God.
2. Secular learning is directly religious in its tendencies, because it trains and educates the mind for the clearer and fuller comprehension of theological truth. (*J. Cranbrook.*)

Vers. 3, 4. **Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?—Climbing the mountain:—** We may fairly compare the life of a Christian to the ascent of a mountain. Propose the text as a serious question. I. SOME WHO ANSWER "WE SHALL" ARE YOUNG BEGINNERS. They have not yet tried the rougher part of the mountain. Be not over-confident. There is a sense in which to be weak is to be strong. II. OTHERS SPEAK OUT OF SHEER IGNORANCE. "Oh," say they, "it is not far to heaven. It is a little thing to be a Christian. You have only to say, 'God be merciful to me,' and the thing is done." Oh, poor ignorant soul, your folly is too common. To the unaccustomed traveller, nothing is more deceptive than a lofty Alp. You think you can get to the top in half an hour, but find it a full day's journey. It is so with religion. III. OTHERS THINK THEY HAVE FOUND A SMOOTH ROAD BY WHICH THEY MAY AVOID ALL ROUGHNESS. Take care, presumptuous soul, for the greener the path the greater the danger. IV. OTHERS THINK THEY WILL BE SURE TO ASCEND BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY CARRY WITH THEM. This is the way in which the worldly-wise and self-sufficient talk, and those who are rich and cumbered with much serving in the world. V. BUT OTHERS SEEM VERY SAD. Why mourn you? "Oh," say they, "we shall never ascend the hill of God." I should have thought you the very ones who would ascend. Why do you think you shall fail? 1. One says: "I am so weak, and the hill is so exceeding high. I can do nothing good." But God will help you. 2. "I am so sorely tried, and the way is so rough." But the road to heaven never was anything but rough, so you may be the more sure you are in the right way. 3. "But I have been sorely tempted; and across my path there is a swollen torrent, and I cannot wade through it." But the Lord knows how to deliver thee. In one of the wild valleys of Cumberland we were rained up for two or three days. The little brooks had been swollen until they roared like thundering rivers. But I noticed, when we did make the attempt, that the sheep which fed upon the mountain side could spring from stone to stone, rest a moment in the middle, while the angry flood rushed on either side, and then leap and spring again. I thought of the text, "He maketh my feet like hind's feet." 4. "But I have lost my way altogether. I cannot see a step before me; a thick fog of doubt and fear hangs over me." We too have passed through such fogs. Let him not fear but trust in the Lord. 5. "But my woe is worse. I have been going down hill. My faith is not as strong as it was; my love has grown cold; my depravity has burst out. I am sure it is all over with me." In climbing a mountain it often occurs that the path winds downward for a season. But Christians never mount better than when they descend. 6. "But I am in such danger. I fear I shall fall." When a Christian looks down it is likely to make his head swim. Look up! The Scripture does not bid us run our race looking at our own tottering legs, but "looking unto Jesus." VI. LOOK AT THE MAN WHO IS ABLE TO ASCEND THE HILL OF THE LORD. 1. He is well-shod. 2. Girt about his loins. 3. He has a strong staff. 4. And a guide. 5. He marks the way. And oh! the joy when the sunset is reached. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The message of the Ascension Psalms:—*On its historical side the Ascension of Christ is an event of surpassing grandeur and sublimity. It is an event without parallel in the history of mankind. For the Ascension of Christ rises far beyond the translations of Enoch or Elijah. His ascension was the ascension of a risen and immortal man, of a spiritualised and glorified body. It was therefore a perfectly unique and unparalleled event. This historic fact, applied to ourselves, penetrating our inmost being, conquering our wills, directing our motives, stirring our thoughts, exalting our actions—this, and this alone, is of redeeming service and eternal consequence. One of the greatest needs of our age is this applied Christianity; this application of historic, doctrinal religion to daily righteousness. We want the life of Christ imputed to us; and imputed, not by some ecclesiastical or juridical fiction, but in a plain, honest, practical way—the way of faith shown forth by works. What a poor paltry thing our modern respectable Christianity too often is! The Christianity of the Gospel is real and glorious. It begins with the cradle, and does not end with the grave. It has no will except the will of God. What is the message of the two Ascension Psalms (xxiv., xxv.)? Their first message is of Christ. That message was primarily and historically fulfilled when Christ Himself passed through the heavens. But the message is not concerning Christ alone. It concerns every Christian in so far as his character and conduct are fashioned after the model of Christ, his redeeming Lord. For as with the Resurrection, so also with the Ascension of Christ. He is the first-fruits; afterwards all that are His. His ascension is the pledge and guarantee of our final ascension. Why did Christ our Lord ascend? The Psalmist answers:

"Because He had clean hands and a pure heart." Because Christ was perfect in heart and life; it was impossible for Him to be holden of death or of earth. Not only because He was perfect Son of God, but also because He was perfect son of man, He ascended into the heavens. His Ascension was accomplished by the force of a Divine and spiritual necessity—a spiritual necessity engendered by His absolute and unblemished righteousness. As fire ascends towards the sun by a natural law, so by a spiritual law goodness ascends towards God. What is true of Christ in perfection is also true of every Christian in part. All who, in humble faith, imitate His character will, by virtue of the same spiritual necessity which compelled His Ascension, themselves also at length ascend whither He has gone before to prepare a place for them. We must earnestly endeavour to practise the character and imitate the conduct of Christ before we can hope to follow in the shining path of His glorious exaltation. Ascension in heart and mind, in conversation and conduct, must be the forerunners of final, bodily ascension. (*Canon Diggle.*)

*Who shall ascend?*—Sometimes the question is asked merely from idle curiosity. Sometimes with a sigh of hopelessness, in sheer despair. See the answer of the Psalm. Not only outward morality, but inward purity. His walk, his work, and his conversation must all be absolutely pure; he must be able to bridle his tongue, as well as keep his heart pure. The text comes to us on Ascension Day to tell of one who has climbed this hill. It is because He has gone up before us that we too are able to enter into that heavenly hill. He has ascended up on high, as our great forerunner. This day's truth once more inspires us with courage. (*E. A. Stuart, M.A.*)

*A great question and its answer:*—This introductory question, sung as the procession climbed the steep, had realised what was needed for those who should get the entrance that they sought, and comes to be a very significant and important one. I. THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS. It lies deep in all men's hearts, and underlies sacrifices and priesthoods and asceticisms of all sorts. It sometimes rises in the thoughts of the most degraded, and it is present always with some of the better and nobler of men. It indicates that, for life and blessedness, men must get somehow to the side of God, and be quiet there, as children in their father's house. The universal consciousness is, that this fellowship with God, which is indispensable to a man's peace, is impossible to a man's impurity. So the question raises the thought of the consciousness of sin which comes creeping over a man when he is sometimes feeling after God, and seems to batter him in the face and fling him back into the outer darkness. That this question should rise and insist upon being answered as it does proves these three things—man's need of God, man's sense of God's purity, man's consciousness of his own sin. The "ascent of the hill of the Lord" includes all the present life, and all the future. II. THE ANSWER TO THIS GREAT QUESTION. The Psalm contains the qualifications necessary. They are four. They mean, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." An impossible requirement is laid down, broad and stern and unmistakable. But is that all?

Read on in Psalm, "He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." So then, the impossible requirement is made possible as a gift to be received. In Jesus Christ there is the new life bestowed that will develop the righteousness far beyond our reach. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The soul's cry and the true response:*—I. THE SOUL'S CRY. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" The spirit of this question is, how is fellowship with the great God to be attained? This state of fellowship with God is the great want of human souls. It is—1. A very elevated state. It is the highest state of moral being. A soul in communion with God is high up above the mists, impurities, and tumults of worldly life. 2. A very holy state. Communion with Him is the holiest condition of souls. 3. A very desirable state. All should ascend, but what is the qualification for ascending? Of all the desirable things in life there is nothing so desirable for man as fellowship with God. For this his nature craves. II. THE TRUE RESPONSE.

1. The way of reaching this state. (1) Moral cleanness. A man may be clean-handed so far as the eyes of men are concerned, and black-hearted to the eyes of God. The clean hands must be hands washed by the pure sentiments, motives, and aims of a holy heart. The means—(2) Moral reality. 2. The blessedness of reaching this state. "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord." This blessing includes all others—loving fellowship with himself, and the possession of conscious and divinely recognised rectitude of character. (*Homilist.*) *The one requirement:*—"Who may ascend?" was a picturesquely appropriate question for singers toiling upwards; and "who may stand?" for those who hoped presently to enter the sacred presence. The ark which they bore had brought disaster to Dagon's temple, so



that the philistine lords had asked in terror, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" And at Beth-Shemesh its presence had been so fatal that David had abandoned the design of bringing it up, and said, "How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?" The answer which lays down the qualifications of true dwellers in Jehovah's house may be compared with the similar outlines of ideal character in Psalm xv. and Isa. xxxiii. 14. The one requirement is "purity." Here that requirement is deduced from the majesty of Jehovah, as set forth in vers. 1, 2, and from the designation of His dwelling as "holy." But this is the postulate of the whole Psalter. In it the approach to Jehovah is purely spiritual, while the outward access is used as a symbol; and the conditions are of the same nature as the approach. The general truth implied is, that the character of the God determines the character of the worshippers. Worship is supreme admiration, culminating in imitation. Its law is always, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." A god of war will have warriors, and a god of lust sensualists for his devotees. The worshippers in Jehovah's holy place must be holy. The details of the answer are but the echoes of a conscience enlightened by the perception of His character. In ver. 4 it may be noted that of the four aspects of purity enumerated, the two central refer to the inward life (pure heart; lifts not his desire unto vanity), and these are embedded, as it were, in the outward life of deeds and words. Purity of act is expressed by "clean hands,"—neither red with blood nor foul with grubbing in dunghills for gold and other so-called good. Purity of speech is condensed into the one virtue of truthfulness (swears not to a falsehood). But the outward will only be right if the inward disposition is pure, and that inward purity will only be realised when desires are carefully curbed and directed. As is the desire, so is the man. Therefore the prime requisite for a pure heart is the withdrawal of affection, esteem, and longing from the solid-seeming illusions of sense. "Vanity" has, indeed, the special meaning of idols, but the notion of earthly good apart from God is more relevant here. In ver. 5 the possessor of such purity is represented as receiving "a blessing, even righteousness," from God, which is by many taken to mean beneficence on the part of God, "inasmuch as, according to the Hebrew religious view of the world, all good is regarded as reward from God's retributive righteousness, and consequently as that of man's own righteousness or right conduct" (Hupfeld). The expression is thus equivalent to "salvation" in the next clause. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

*Character-fitness for worship*.—The occasion of this Psalm is one of the grandest and most illustrious that anywhere occurs in history. By the phrases of ascending into the hill of God and standing in His holy place, the Psalmist would point out the persons who are to be admitted to worship God in His temple. In ascertaining the qualifications of the citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem the Psalmist does not so much as mention the external observances, the costly and laborious rites of the ceremonial law, but dwells alone on the great and essential duties of morality, which are of universal and eternal obligation. The qualifications here are those of the heart and of the life. "Clean hands and a pure heart." It is not enough that we wash our hands in innocence before men: we must be pure in heart before the eyes of infinite perfection. True religion is religion of the heart; it is a principle dwelling in the mind, that extends its influence through the whole man, and regulates the life. Unless our religion enter the heart we have no religion at all. We can never attain to the true beauties of holiness unless, like the king's daughters, we be all glorious within. A life sacred to devotion and virtue, sacred to the practice of truth and undefiled religion, joined to a heart pure, pious, and benevolent, constitute an offering more acceptable at the altars of the Most High God than whole hecatombs of burnt offerings and a thousand hills of frankincense in a flame. (*J. Logan, F.R.S.E.*)

*Character developed by association*.—As soon as spirit touches spirit there springs up between them a relationship which we call moral. Whatever rightly flows from such spiritual contact is morally good. It is in the intercourse of human society that man proves himself to be a moral being. Faith, by admitting us into fresh contact with God and with our fellows, by endowing us with new relationships that have become ours through our inclusion within the new humanity, even the body of Christ, has necessarily laid upon us new moral obligations, responsibilities, and functions, all of which spring out of the very nature of our corporate faith. If we would determine the lines and features of the Christian temper and character we must look to the nature of that great fellowship into which we have been called. The Christian character asked of us is that habit, that activity, which must follow on our acceptance within the assembly of the first-born,

within the city of God. Whatever that acceptance makes desirable and natural, that is good and that is holy. The Church is a moral conception, a moral condition, by which we are to determine character. I. THE CHURCH IS A HOUSEHOLD. What are the virtues essential to a household such as our Lord pictures, an organised kingdom of work? Fertile activity. The character will be forthcoming, energetic, stirring. The household demands activity of character, and it asks for a skilled and trained activity. What type and rule of character is suggested by—II. THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY. It is a nursery and school of virtue. A family produces a character of courtesy, a sensitive recognition of varying characteristics, a delicate sense of others' rights. It instils self-repression, self-control, honour for one another, esteem of one another, the stooping of the strong to the weak. Negative self-repression will learn to give itself positive outflow in sympathy, tenderness, and affection. III. THE CHURCH AS A BODY. What stamp does that great conception set upon character? It adds one peculiar note, the note of witness. A body is in essence the evidence, the proof, the pledge of that which acts through it. Its sole function throughout all its parts is to make manifest that secret presence which animates and directs it. The Christian who is of the body has mission, has vocation. He is there on earth to declare the name, to manifest the glory of God. The Christian character must therefore be stamped with the seal of mission. IV. THE CHURCH AS A TEMPLE. There is to be positive beauty in the Christian character. It is to be full of delicate and lovely refinement. There is to be a touch upon it of grace, a charm of majesty and consecration. A character built up out of purity and love will have about it also the sense of mystery, the spirit of the temple. Purity and mystery, the temple gifts, where are they? Where are they in us, in our lives, so mixed, so unpurged, and so worldly? Not until we are more evidently of the body and of the temple will men be able to recognise and confess, "this is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O Jacob!" (*Canon H. Scott Holland.*) Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.—*The pure in heart*:—High up among some lofty mountains you may at some time have been surprised and delighted by the sudden and unlooked-for discovery of a crystal-like lake, nestling cosily amid giant cliffs, or hemmed in and well-nigh hidden from you by a forest of solemn and majestic pines or cedars. By day its placid surface reflected with dazzling splendour the sun's effulgence; while in the night the lovelier and more subdued glories of the moon and stars were so clearly reflected that the lake seemed transformed into a crystal setting which held these shining jewels. In like manner is the Psalmist's assertion of the text but the reflection of that which has ever been in the mind of the Creator, and which later on was enunciated by the God-man in the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But why such stress upon this virtue of purity? Because—I. IMPURITY IS THE SIN GOD MOST HATES. In proof, see what brought on the Flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the most terrible punishments which came on God's people. In the history of nations purity, pre-eminence, and power go together. Let a nation throw down the statue of Purity and it sounds its own death-knell. II. A PURE HEART PURIFIES ALL THAT IT APPROACHES. It is so even with the most ferocious natures, and so it is with human beings. A corrupt heart draws out in an hour all that is bad in us; a spiritual one brings out, and draws to itself, all that is best and purest. Such was Christ. He stood in the world the light of the world, to which all rays of light gradually gathered. He stood in the presence of impurity, and men became pure. III. WE WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN MUST SEEK TO BECOME AND TO BE LIKE HIM. As light can have no fellowship with darkness, so can there be no fellowship between us and Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Impurity has on the spiritual man precisely the same effect that paralysis has on the physical man. The sin of impurity severs us from Christ. IV. HOW MAY WE WIN THIS PURITY OF HEART? We would say—1. Stand out firmly against evil thoughts and imaginations. A man's heart may become so foul that purity refuses any longer to be its guest. Then Satan has won the battle. 2. Be careful as to the influence of your companions. 3. Also be careful as to what you read. Books often blunt the moral sense. Dwell often upon the spotless purity of the Creator, and of the Master while upon earth. Pray daily for grace and power to hate everything that can take away from the whiteness and cleanness of your soul, and to guard against it. (*Henry Mottet.*) *Spiritual catharism*:—This new term, derived from a Greek word signifying purity, has been invented by Mr. Tomlinson to distinguish between ordinary and chemical cleanliness; for the two things are not by any means the same. We imagine that our bodies, when we have thoroughly

washed them, are perfectly free from all impurity ; but the chemist proves to us by convincing experiments that, though we wash ourselves with snow-water, and make our hands never so clean, we are still unclean. We cannot be made chemically clean by any process which would not injure or destroy us. The slightest exposure to the air—the great receptacle of all impurities—covers our skin with a greasy organic film, which pollutes every substance with which we come into contact. It is well known that the process of crystallisation in chemical solutions is set going by the presence of some impurity, in the shape of motes or dust-particles, which act as nuclei around which the salts gather into crystals. But if the solution be protected from all floating impurities by a covering of cotton-wool, which filters the air, it may be kept for any length of time at a low temperature without crystallising. A glass rod that is made chemically clean by being washed with strong acids or alkalies, such as sulphuric acid or caustic potash, can be put into the solution without exciting any change in it ; but the smallest touch of what the most fastidious would call clean fingers starts at once the process of crystallisation, thus showing that the fingers are not truly clean. Nature is exceedingly dainty in her operations. Unless the agents we employ are stainlessly pure they will not produce the results which we naturally expect from them. Thus, for instance, if we scrape a few fragments from a fresh surface of camphor, and allow them to fall on water that is newly drawn from the cistern-tap, into a chemically clean vessel, they will revolve with great rapidity, and sweep over the surface. But if the vessel, before being filled, has been rubbed and polished with a so-called clean cloth, or if the water has stood awhile, or if a finger has been placed in it, the particles of camphor will lie perfectly motionless ; thus proving that, however clean the cloth or the vessel or the finger may seem, an impurity has been imparted which prevents the camphor from exhibiting its strange movements. Or to adopt a more familiar experiment : if we pour a quantity of lemonade, or any other aerated fluid, into a glass which seems to be perfectly clean and bright, the lemonade will at once effervesce and form bubbles of gas on the sides of the glass. But if we first wash the glass with some strong acid or alkali, and then rinse it thoroughly with fresh water newly drawn, we may pour the lemonade into it and no bubbles will be seen. The reason is, that in the former case the glass was not really clean, and the impurities present acted as nuclei in liberating gas. But in the latter case the glass was really clean, and so could no longer liberate the gas from the liquid. Could we keep it clean we might stir the liquid a whole day and no sparkle would be raised. So, then, in common things, and yet more in spiritual, our utmost purity is a mere relative or comparative thing. We are never really clean. Our idea of purity and God's idea are two very different things. See Job's confession, "Now, mine eye seeth Thee ; wherefore," &c. The physical fact is but a faint image of the moral ; and chemistry, in showing us the wonderful purity of nature's operations, gives a new meaning and a deeper emphasis to the declarations of Scripture that nature's God is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." But to some men the infinite purity of God is a mere proposition exciting no emotion in the soul, a mere scientific truth like the chemist's talk about cleanliness. To another it is the most intense of all experiences, stirring and transforming the whole nature. Impurity in natural things is caused by waste, disintegration, or combustion. When objects have served their purpose in one form they become effete, and therefore impure. Running water is living water, and therefore is sweet and pure ; but whenever it becomes stagnant it loses its life, begins to putrefy, and becomes foul and unwholesome. A rock is called a live rock so long as it is hard and sound in the quarry, "glistens like the sea-waves, and rings under the hammer like a brazen bell," but whenever it is cut out of the quarry and exposed to the air it begins to lose the life that kept its particles together, and crumbles into dust. In its native bed the rock is pure, but when it is weathered by exposure it forms the mud of the highway, or the dust that pollutes everything by its presence. The clay and soil of our fields are caused by the oxidation or burning of pure metals ; are, in fact, the ashes of metals. The dirt that cleaves to our footsteps, as the emblem of all impurity, is produced by the disintegration of the brightest metals or the most sparkling jewels. We say of a tree, that it is living when it is growing and putting forth foliage and fruit, and in this state it is pure and beautiful ; but whenever it ceases to grow it dies, and decay begins, and it harbours all sorts of abominable things, the products of corruption. Everywhere throughout nature impurity is caused by objects ceasing to preserve the natural life that is in them, ceasing to serve the purpose for which they were created. And so is it with man. Impurity in him is caused by the loss



of spiritual life. He has broken the law and order of his existence, and his whole nature has disintegrated in an atmosphere of sin. And just as mica is the first product of the purest crystal when it is broken down from the law of its creation, so all impurity in man is the vile product—the rust, as it were—of a nature made in the image of God, through its corruption—that is, as the word implies, its breaking up together by sin. Separated from God, his rock, he has suffered decay in all his parts. Ceasing to grow and abide in the Tree of Life, he has been cast forth as a branch and is withered, the prey of vile lusts and morbid vanities. And this is true of all men. Yet all men are not alike. Many feel incapable of the vices which they see committed around them. But such moral purity as we see in some individuals, causing them to thank God in their hearts that they are not as other men, is like ordinary cleanliness as compared with chemical cleanliness. We think our hands, or a glass of water, or a table-cloth clean; they certainly seem to be pure and spotless; our senses can detect no defilement in them, and for the common purposes of life they may be sufficiently clean. But when we submit them to the test of chemical experiment we find out the hidden impurities, and understand how widely different our notions of cleanliness are from the absolute truth. Chemical cleanliness, I have said, is produced by washing vessels and substances that are employed in experiments in strong sulphuric acid, or with a strong solution of caustic potash, and then rinsing with water. Analogous to these powerful appliances are the means which God often employs to produce moral purity, those chastenings of the flesh and crucifixions of the spirit which are not joyous but grievous. He sends sickness, that wears out the body; trouble, that racks the mind; and sorrow, that takes all the relish out of life. He mortifies self-seeking by disappointment, and humbles pride by failure. He makes lust its own scourge, and the idolatry of the heart its own punishment. By all these searching and terribly energetic purifiers, that corrode the soul as sulphuric acid does the body, He helps forward outwardly the Spirit's work of renewing in the heart. His will is our sanctification. But it needs the burning heat of severe, oft-repeated, and long-protracted trial, working together with God's Spirit, to evaporate the incongruous elements of sin and sense that make us impure, and to build up the pure transparent crystal of Christian simplicity. And this process is ever going on,—and amid the common exposures of our daily work. Not out of the world, but in the world, are found the disciplines which purify the soul. (*Hugh Macmillan, D.D.*) *The qualifications for our heavenly ascension*:—This Psalm is associated with the removal of the ark of the Lord to the temple which stood on Mount Zion. It sets forth those who should be regarded as qualified to ascend Mount Zion, and take part in the proceedings of that memorable day. I. CLEAN HANDS. The Jews attached great importance to clean hands, especially before eating and worshipping. In the literal sense, clean hands may not be regarded as a necessary qualification for Christians in order to their admission to the true holy place, which is heaven, but rather what clean hands typify and represent in a spiritual sense. Our hands are the representatives of our actions. Therefore clean hands, to us Christians, would mean what we understand by stainless conduct. They mean lawful and right, honest and irreproachable actions. Our hands, our practical conduct, must be clean, morally unstained, undefiled, if we are to follow in the track of Christ's ascension. II. A PURE HEART. The character of a man's heart determines, above all things, his standing in the sight of God, his fitness to see God. Clean hands without a pure heart, an outward stainless life without the inward spirit of purity, will not suffice to admit a man to the holy place of God's presence. What is a pure heart? It means that the fountain-source of a man's nature, from which flow all the streams of his life, is unpoluted by sensual lusts, by forbidden passions, by foul imaginations, or by anything whatever that is morally unclean. By a pure heart is meant not simply a chaste heart, but an altogether uncorrupt heart, of which chastity is only one of many forms. III. HATH NOT LIFTED UP HIS SOUL UNTO VANITY. Hebrew, "hath not set his heart upon a thing of nought." Not fixed his heart upon things whose intrinsic value is worthless; such things as money, titles, society, worldly knowledge, earthly treasures, and the pleasures of this life. He does not set his affections on things of the earth. He does not allow them to take that place in his heart which is due to God, and to God only. IV. NOR SWORN DECEITFULLY. By this is meant swearing falsely, taking an oath to a lie. The man who shall stand in God's holy place must be a "man of truth"; a man like Nathaniel, in whom there is no guile, no artfulness, no pretence, no insincerity, no hypocrisy, no unreality, no untruth in any shape whatever. He must also be true "in the inward parts," in his motives, aims,

intentions, and aspirations. Ascending to heaven is a matter of spiritual character. Then who, among ordinary mortals, is really qualified for ascending to heaven? All that we can do is to keep the standard daily before our eyes, and do our honest best to reach it as far as possible. The life we are now living day by day may be an ascending life, ever moving upward, heavenward, Christ-ward. (*H. G. Youard.*)

**Ver. 5. And righteousness from the God of his salvation.—God's blessing of righteousness:**—The first glance at these words might suggest that they told us one of the rewards which the man who had fulfilled the preceding requirements received from God. But that would be but a poor thing to say; there would neither be gospel nor logic, as it seems to me, in it. For, according to that, all that was said here would simply be that, if a man would make himself righteous, God would then make him righteous; that if a man cleansed his heart, and got his hands pure and his soul fixed upon God and his lips truthful, then, after that, God would give him righteousness, which, by the hypothesis, he has already got. I do not think that is the meaning of the words, both because such a meaning would destroy the sequence of thought, and because a man cannot so make himself righteous at all. It is more natural to take these words as carrying on the description of the man who is fit to stand in the holy place, than as introducing the new thought of certain other blessings which the righteous man of the previous verse receives. So regarded, we have a deep thought here in answer to the unspoken doubt which must needs arise on hearing such conditions. One can well fancy the hearer replying, your statement of qualifications is only a round-about way of saying *No one*: how can I or anybody attain these requirements? If these be necessary, we may as well loiter in the flowery vales below as toil up only to see Alps on Alps arise, and the temple shining far above us, inaccessible after all. But if we rightly grasp the sequence of thought here, we have here the blessed truth that God's impossible requirements are God's great gifts. We may put that as the second great principle in these verses: the men who are pure receive purity as a gift from God. God will give righteousness. That means here outward and inner purity, or, in effect, the sum of the qualifications already insisted on. That is a grand thought, though it sounds strange to some men, that moral condition—a certain state of heart and mind—can be given to a man. Many people dismiss such a hope as an illusion, and smile at such a gospel as an impossibility. So it is for us. We can but try to bring motives and influences to bear on one another which may tend to shape character. But God can work on the springs of thought and will, and can put into our hearts purity and righteousness, however alien and remote they may be from our natural dispositions and from our past lives. Another great truth here is, that God can put into a man's heart some one germinal principle which shall develop and flower out into all graces and purities and beauties of character: all these things that make up the qualifications, they can all be given to a man in germ from God's own hand. Still further, these words imply that righteousness, in the sense of purity and holiness, is salvation. "He shall receive righteousness from the God of his salvation." David did not merely think of salvation as merely temporal deliverance, and we are not to think of mere deliverance from external punishment or some material hell as exhausting its meaning, but to understand that the main part of salvation is that God shall impart to us Himself, and fill our souls with His righteousness. But we have to remember that all this is made a great deal more plain to us in Jesus Christ. He comes and brings to us a righteousness by which we shall be made pure if we will only love Him and trust Him, and in our hearts there will bloom and grow the exotics of holy and virtuous character, and our lives will be fragrant with the precious fruits of holy and virtuous conduct. By the implanting within us of His own Spirit, by the new life kindred with His own, which we thence derive, of which righteousness is the very life breath—for, as Paul says, "The renewed spirit is life because of righteousness"—as well as by the mere ordinary means of bringing new and powerful motives to holiness, by the attraction of His own example, and by love which moulds to likeness, Christ gives us righteousness, and implants at least the germ of all purity. The last thought here is—the men who receive righteousness are the men who seek it from God. "This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face," and, as the last words ought to be rendered, "this is Jacob, the true Israel." So then there is an answer to another unspoken question that might arise. The question might still remain—How am I to get this great gift? The Psalmist believed in a heart of love so deep and so Divine that there was nothing more needed in order to get all the fulness of His righteousness and

purity into our stained spirits, but simply to ask for it. To desire is to have, to seek is to possess, to wish is to be enriched with all this purity. And we know how, beyond the Psalmist's anticipations and the prophet's hopes, that great giving love of God has drawn near to man, in the unspeakable gift of His dear Son, in whom the most sinful amongst us has righteousness, and the weakest amongst us has strength. And we know how the one condition which is needed in order that there should pour down into our foul hearts the cleansing flood of His granted righteousness, is simply that we should be willing to accept, that we should desire to possess, and that we should turn to Christ and get from Him that which He gives. In this world things of little worth have to be toiled for. Nothing for nothing is the inexorable law in the world's markets, but God sells without money and without price. Life and the air which sustains it are gifts. We have to work for smaller things. In the sweat of our brow we have to win the bread that perishes, but the bread of life "the Son of Man will give unto us," and of it we have but to "take and eat."

"'Tis only heaven can be had for the asking,

'Tis only God that is given away."

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Men have been asking all through the ages, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" They have built for themselves Babels "that their tops might reach heaven," but it has been all in vain. You have tried to climb. Your progress has been slow, like that of some crawling insect upon some smooth surface—an inch in advance with immense pains, and then a great slide backwards. But heaven bends down to us, and Christ puts down the palm of His hand, if I may say so, and bids us step on to it, and so bears us up on His hands. We shall not rise without our own efforts and many a hard struggle, but He will give us the power to struggle, and the certainty that we shall not set a stout heart to a steep hill in vain. So put away your hopelessness, and cease your painful toils. "Say not in thine heart who shall ascend into heaven—the word is nigh thee,"—even the word of promise that trusting to Christ, and filled with His strength, we shall mount up with wings as eagles. The conditions may seem hard and even impossible, amounting to a perpetual sentence of exclusion from the presence of God, and therefore from light and well-being. But be of good cheer. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness you shall be filled. Seek God in Christ, and then, though nothing that has not wings can reach the steep summit, you will have the wings of faith and love budding on your shoulders with which you may reach it, and be invested by your righteous Saviour with that "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints," arrayed in which you will be fit to pass into the secret place of the Most High, and to dwell for evermore in the blaze of that pure Light. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The gift of righteousness*:—Among the Mexican Catholics there used to be great anxiety to provide themselves with a priest's cast-off robe to be buried in. These were begged or bought as the greatest of treasures; kept in sight or always at hand to remind them of approaching death. When their last hour drew near this robe was flung over their breasts and they died happy, their stiffening fingers grasping its folds. The robe of Christ's righteousness is not provided for the dying hour merely, for the hasty investiture of the spirit when about to be ushered into the presence of the King.

Vers. 7, 8. **Lift up your heads, O ye gates.**—*The ascension of Christ*:—It is generally admitted by expositors that these words have a secondary, if not a primary, reference to the return of the Mediator to heaven, when He had accomplished the work of human redemption. Bishop Horsley affirms that the Jehovah of this Psalm must be Christ; and the entrance of the Redeemer into the kingdom of His Father is the event prophetically announced. But you will say, Are we to rejoice in the departure of our Lord from His Church? Suppose that Christ had not been exalted to the right hand of God, would not the supposition materially affect our spiritual condition? The resurrection of Christ was both the proof and consequence of the completeness of His mediatorial work. If He had remained in the grave we could only have regarded Him as a man like one of ourselves: we could not have looked on Him as our substitute. It is easy to certify ourselves of the indispensableness of the resurrection, but why may not the risen Mediator remain with His Church? We reply, the reception of our nature, in the person of our surety, into heavenly places, was necessary to our comfort and assurance. So long as Christ remained on earth there was no evidence that He had won for our nature



readmission to the paradise from which it had been exiled. If He had not returned to the Father we must always have feared that our redemption was incomplete. The plan of redemption was designed to reveal to the world the Trinity of the God-head. There could not have been the thorough manifestation of the Divinity of the Son had not Christ ascended up on high. His ascension and exaltation may well furnish us with great matter of rejoicing. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The two ascensions of Christ*:—"The King of glory" is our Lord Jesus Christ, as we acknowledge Him every morning in the *Te Deum*, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ." He is the King of glory, the Giver and Owner of life and glory; the Brightness of His Father's glory and the express Image of His Person. That holy Son had on the day of His incarnation emptied Himself of His glory for a while, and had become like unto the meanest of His creatures. On the day of His crucifixion He offered up all His humiliation, for a sacrifice to His Father; on His resurrection day He showed Himself ready to take His glory again; and on this ascension day He actually took it. The King of glory is Christ the Lord of Hosts, and the gates which He commands to be opened to Him are the gates of heaven—the gates of His own chief city, to which He is returning as David returned to Jerusalem, after His triumphant warfare against His and our enemies. He returns, as the Lord mighty in battle, having bruised Satan under His feet, first in His temptation, then in His passion on the Cross, lastly in His descent into hell. And as David came accompanied by his guards and soldiers, who had been fighting on his side, and could not but rejoice, as faithful and dutiful subjects, in their king's victory; so the Psalm represents the Son of David returning to the Father's right hand with a guard of angels; who, as they come near the holy and awful gate, cry aloud and say, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors." But why is the song repeated? Why are the everlasting gates invited to lift up their heads a second time? We may not pretend, here or in any place, to know all the meaning of the Divine Psalms. But what if the repetition of the verse was meant to put us in mind that our Saviour's ascension will be repeated also? He will not indeed die any more; death can no more have any dominion over Him; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Neither, of course, can He rise again any more. But as He will come again at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead, so after that descent He will have to ascend again. Now observe the answer made this second time. Christ ascending the first time, to intercede for us at His Father's right hand, is called "the Lord mighty in battle." But Christ, ascending the second time, after the world hath been judged, and the good and bad separated for ever, is called "the Lord of Hosts." Why this difference in His Divine titles? We may reverently take it, that it signifies to us the difference between His first and second coming down to earth, His first and second ascension into heaven. As in other respects His first coming was in great humility, so in this, that He came in all appearance alone. The angels were indeed waiting round Him, but not visibly, not in glory. "He trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him." He wrestled with death, hell, and Satan alone: alone He went up into heaven. Thus He showed Himself "the Lord mighty in battle," mighty in that single combat. But when He shall come down and go up the second time, He will show Himself "the Lord of Hosts." Instead of coming down alone, in mysterious silence, as in His wonderful incarnation, He will be followed by all the Armies of heaven. "The Lord my God will come, and all His saints with Him." "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints." Thus He will come down as the Lord of Hosts, and as the Lord of Hosts He will ascend again to His Father. After the judgment He will pass again through the everlasting doors, with a greater company than before; for He will lead along with Him, into the heavenly habitations, all those who shall have been raised from their graves and found worthy. This is Christ's second and more glorious ascension, in which He will be visibly and openly accompanied by the souls and bodies of the righteous, changed and made glorious, like unto His glorious body. The angels and saints will come with Him from heaven, and both they and all good Christians will return with Him thither. (*J. Keble.*) *The three processions*:—I. THE PRIMARY REFERENCE OF THE TEXT. See the account of the removal of the ark from the house of Obéd-Edom to Jerusalem. II. THE SIMILAR SCENE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. The triumphal procession on palm Sunday. That procession could boast but few circumstances of dignity and majesty. III. THE SPIRITUAL PASSAGE OF CHRIST BY FAITH INTO THE STRONGHOLD OF THE HEART OF MAN. 1. The heart is susceptible of comparison in many particulars with the literal city of Jerusalem. 2. The remedy is to be found in admission of

Christ into the heart. He alone can thoroughly cleanse the desecrated temple. 3. Therefore lay aside your pride and self-righteousness, and become Christ's disciples. IV. THE SECOND ADVENT IS HASTENING FORWARD. That progress is to be triumphant in character. Its issue must be certain victory. (*E. M. Goulburn, D.C.L.*)

Ver. 8. **Who is this King of glory.**—*The King of glory*:—In the old days, when the king of England wished to enter the city of London through Temple Bar, the gate being closed against him, the herald advanced and demanded entrance. "Open the gate," shouted the herald. "Who is there?" questioned a voice from within. "The king of England!" answered the herald. The gate was at once opened, and the king passed, amid the acclamations of the people. But the custom was an old one, and stretched back perhaps thousands of years before England was known under that name. Jesus is our "King of glory." He is our Lord, "strong and mighty in battle." We may apply it very fitly to Christ's ascension to heaven after His life and suffering and death and resurrection here on the earth. When Christ came to be born in Bethlehem He put aside the glory which He had before the world was, and, though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. As one of the old preachers said, Christ has gone to heaven as a victor; leading sin, Satan, death, hell, and all His enemies in triumph at His chariot wheels. Christ went back to heaven after the mightiest battle ever fought in the universe, and went back triumphant over sin and death. We might properly apply these words to the coming of Christ, to the life of man, and to the civilisation of the world. Christ has been taking possession of the life of mankind. He is King of glory in modern civilisation. In spite of all the wickedness there is in the world, it has already come about that the most dominant personality in it is Christ. Christ has possessed and become King of glory in the very counting of the years in modern centuries. Christ has knocked at the gates of the world of art, and He is the King of glory in it. Go back and look at the works of the great masters and you will see that they are pictures of the Christ. And when, in modern times, has the world of art and modern invention in illustration been so stirred as in Tissot's "Life of Christ in Art"? Christ has knocked at the door of literature, and He is the King of glory in the literature of the world. Where there is one book written against Christ there are a hundred thousand books written to illustrate His teaching or impress the lessons of His life. We may apply it also with great appropriateness to the door of our hearts. (*L. A. Banks, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **Lift up your heads, O ye gates.**—*A triumphal entrance*:—I. THE GREAT THING TO DESIRE IS THE ENTRANCE OF THE KING OF GLORY INTO OUR SOULS. Without it thou wilt be like a house without a tenant—cold, cheerless, dilapidated, desolate. Thy heart will be as a nest without a bird—a poor, sad thing. II. THERE ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO THIS COMING INTO OUR HEARTS. The text speaks about "doors" and "gates," and there are such to our hearts, and they need to be "lifted up" ere the King of glory can come in. Sometimes it is our wicked prejudice. We do not want to know the Gospel; or our love of sin, which we do not care to give up. Then there is the door which I may call the iron gate, that entereth into the city—the door of unbelief. That unbelief is the ruin of souls. III. IF CHRIST IS TO ENTER WE MUST BE WILLING TO REMOVE ALL THESE. The text says, "Lift up your heads," as if they were to lift them up themselves. Though salvation is of grace, it is never against, but always with our will. IV. IT IS GRACE THAT MUST ENABLE YOU TO BE THUS WILLING. Picture the inhabitants trying to lift up the gates themselves. They cannot, and what shall they do? An invisible spirit stands by them, puts his power with theirs, and up go the gates. V. JESUS WILL ENTER. He was willing to come in before: the unwillingness was all in us. VI. AND HE IS THE KING OF GLORY. This title belongs to the Saviour. It proclaims Him in His highest authority. What peerless prince is this, with a name above every name? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ the High Priest of our profession in heaven*:—The common notion seems to be that all the offices of the Mediator to us-ward took place before the ascension. Consistently with this belief that high festival is despised and neglected. The truth is, that His acts after His ascension are as distinct and important as those which took place before that event. It was not till the ascension that He offered "gifts and sacrifices for men." As the efficacy of the slain victim of old depended on its blood being brought into "the holiest of all," so the efficacy of that sacrifice consummated on the Cross depends and is assured to

us by its continual presentation by our Mediator in heaven. . . . The heavenly gates have been lifted up, and the King of glory has gone in. But "who is this King of glory?" The Eternal Son of the Father, clad with the white robe of expiation, girt with the golden zone of the priesthood, pleading the cause not only of the Church at large, but of every individual member thereof. There is not a trial we have, as we pass through this vale of tears, but He knows it and recognises it as the lot of humanity from His own actual experience. (*T. Huntington, M.A.*)

*The triumphant ascension of Christ into heaven:*—Every circumstance in this description is suited to impress us with a lofty sense of the majesty of the Son of God. 1. He is described as a powerful conqueror. In what conflicts has He been engaged? We can speak of Him as having overcome the world, and as subduing the great enemy of man and bruising the serpent's head. 2. The universal sovereign. Note His pre-eminent dignity. He is seated upon the throne of the universe. 3. He is "the King of glory." This title includes in its meaning the substance of the description previously given. This is a subject in which we all are deeply concerned. For henceforth we can look to Christ as our Mediator at the right hand of God; as the Head of His Church, and the Author of all spiritual blessings; and as opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Lessons—(1) The subject is suited to inspire us with a sure trust in the Captain of our Salvation. (2) It invites us to have our thoughts and affections in heaven. (3) It teaches us to look forward to another ascension yet in futurity, and calls us to prepare for it. (*Will. Dealtry, D.D.*)

*The ascension of Christ:*—Consider the prophetic reference of these striking words. The ark was the type of Christ. We may regard the removal of the ark to Mount Zion as typifying Christ's ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem. I. THE TITLE WHICH IS HERE GIVEN TO HIM. "The King of glory." When He lived among men little did He appear like a king at all. But in spite of all mockeries He was a King even then. There are multitudes who have still low thoughts of the Lord Jesus, and there are many religious systems whose tendency is to produce such a result. II. THE DIGNITY AND BLESSEDNESS CLAIMED FOR HIM. Admission into the heavenly mansions. Who are the persons that claim for Him this high honour? The angelic hosts. And the spirits of just men made perfect took part. See the right which He had to the honour and blessedness which were now claimed for Him. That is taken for granted. No favour is craved. Admission is not a privilege implored or supplicated. He had a right to the heavenly kingdom as the promised reward of His toils and sufferings. He had also a right on the ground of conquest. The connection between the victory which He won and the glories which awaited Him is quite obvious. III. THE RECEPTION WHICH AWAITED HIM. Here we can say but little, for on such a theme poor is thought, and altogether impotent the most emphatic expressions. Well may we, therefore, rejoice in the ascension of Christ. With the fact of the ascension we should combine its special objects and purposes. They relate not to Himself alone, but to us likewise. The ascension of Christ should remind us of the glorious, yet solemn and momentous, fact of His second coming. (*Expository Outlines.*)

*An urgent demand, and an earnest inquiry:*—I. THE DEMAND. It may be applied to three events—1. To the entrance of the ark into the holy city (2 Sam. vi. ; 1 Chron. xv.). 2. To the advent of Christ at His incarnation. The doors and gates of the world's heart were shut against Him. "He came to His own," &c. 3. To the ascension of Christ into heaven. 4. To the admission of Christ into the human heart. "In the Gospel history," says an old writer, "Christ had a fourfold entertainment amongst men. Some received Him into their house, but not into their heart, as Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 44). Some into the heart, but not into the house, as the faithful centurion (Matt. viii. 8). Some into neither, as the faithless Gergesenes (Matt. viii. 34). Some into both, as Lazarus, Martha, and Mary." And Christ now seeks admission into men's hearts, but the gates are closed. 5. To the return of Christ to heaven at last. "After the judgment," says Keble, "He will pass again through the everlasting doors with a greater company than before; for He will lead along with Him into the heavenly habitation all those who shall have been raised from their graves and found worthy" (1 Thess. iv. 14-18). II. AN EARNEST INQUIRY. "Who is this King of glory?" The question is twice put. None can be of greater importance. The answer tells. 1. That He is one strong in Himself. "The Lord strong." 2. That He is "mighty in battle." His conquests are moral, and how numerous, constant, universal, and ever-multiplying they are. 3. That He is vast in command. "The Lord of hosts." All material existences, all spiritual are His hosts: the heavenly orbs are



His hosts. He marshals them as a commander his battalions. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *The God who dwells with men*:—Notice the application, the historical and original application, to the King who dwelt with Israel. But the texts speak of the Christ who dwells with men. The devout hearts in Israel felt that there was something more needed than this dwelling of Jehovah within an earthly temple, and the process of revelation familiarised them with the thought that there was yet in the future a “coming of the Lord” in some special manner unknown to them. When was that fulfilled? Christ is the highest raying out of the Divine light, and the mightiest exhibition of the Divine power. Application of these words to the Christ who will dwell in your hearts. His historical manifestation here upon earth, and His incarnation, which is the true dwelling of Deity amongst men, are not enough. They have left something more than a memory to the world. He is as ready to abide, as really within our spirits, as He was to tabernacle upon earth amongst men. And the very central idea of that Gospel which is proclaimed to you all is this, that if you will open the gates of your hearts He will come in, in all the plenitude of His victorious power, and dwell in your hearts, their Conqueror and their King. What a strange contrast, and yet what a close analogy there is between the victorious tones and martial air of this summons of my text, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates! that the King of glory may come in,” and the gentle words of the Apocalypse, “Behold! I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him.” But He that in the Old Covenant, arrayed in warrior arms, summoned the rebels to surrender, is the same as He who in the New, with the night-dews in His hair and patience on His face and gentleness in the touch of His hand upon the door, waits to enter in. Open your hearts, “and the King of glory shall come in.” And He will come in as a King that might seek to enter some besieged and beleaguered city far away on the outposts of His kingdom. If the relieving force can be thrown into Khartoum, the clouds of enemies will scatter. If the King comes in, the city will be impregnable. If you open your hearts for Him He will come and keep you from all your foes, and give you the victory over them all. So to every hard-pressed heart, waging an unequal contest with toils and temptations and sorrows and sins, this great hope is given, that Christ the Victor will come in His power to garrison heart and mind. As of old the encouragement was given to Hezekiah in his hour of peril, when the might of Sennacherib insolently threatened Jerusalem, so the same stirring assurances are given to each who admits Christ’s succours to his heart. “He shall not come into this city, for I will defend this city to save it for Mine own sake.” Open your hearts and the conquering King shall come in. And do not forget that there is another possible application of these words, lying in the future, to the conquering Christ who shall come again. The whole history of the past points onwards to yet a last time when “the Lord shall suddenly come to His Temple,” and that Christ shall so come in like manner as He went into heaven. Again shall the summons ring out. Again shall He come arrayed in flashing brightness, and the visible robes of His imperial majesty. Again shall He appear mighty in battle, when “in righteousness He shall judge and make war.” For a Christian one great memory fills the past—Christ has come; and one great hope brightens the else waste future—Christ shall come. That hope has been far too much left to be cherished only by those who hold a particular opinion as to the chronology of unfulfilled prophecy. But it should be to every Christian heart “the blessed hope,” even the appearing of the glory of Him who has come in the past. He is with and in us in the present. He will come in the future “in His glory, and shall sit upon the throne of His glory.” All our pardon and hope of God’s love depends upon that great fact in the past, that “the Lord was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.” Our purity which will fit us to dwell with God, our present blessedness, all our power for daily strife, and our companionship in daily loneliness, depend on the present fact that He dwells in our hearts by faith, the seed of all good, and the conquering antagonist of every evil. And the one light which fills the future with hope, peaceful because assured, streams from that most sure promise that He will come again, sweeping from the highest heavens, on His head the many crowns of universal monarchy, in His hand the weapons of all-conquering power, and none shall need to ask, “Who is this King of glory?” for every eye shall know Him, the Judge upon His throne, to be the Christ of the Cross. Open the doors of your hearts to Him, as He sues for entrance now in the meekness of His patient love, that on you may fall in that

day of the coming of the King the blessing of the servants "who wait for their returning Lord," that when He cometh and knocketh they may open unto Him immediately. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Christ demanding admission into sinners' hearts*:—1. Entrance solemnly demanded. The demand is addressed to the gates (that is, princes or heads.—*Vulg.*). Hence it is understood of Christ's ascension into heaven. Literally, by the gates are meant those of the Temple, which was a type of heaven. The gates were to be thrown wide open, as was fitting when the ark should enter. It tells of the receiving of Christ into the soul. 2. For whom the demand is made—for the Lord Jesus Christ. When the ark of Gospel ordinances comes, Christ Himself comes to the hearts of sinners for admission. I. INQUIRE WHAT IS THE ARK OF GOSPEL ORDINANCES. 1. The Word read and preached. 2. The two sacraments. II. HOW CHRIST COMES TO SINNERS. 1. With the offer of Himself. 2. Exhibiting Himself in the sacraments. 3. In both He demands admission. III. INFERENCES FROM THE FOREGOING. 1. The presence of Gospel ordinances shows that Christ is come to our hearts seeking admission. 2. This coming will aggravate the condemnation of those who refuse. IV. WHAT IS IT TO OPEN THE HEART TO CHRIST? There is an initial opening at conversion, and a progressive one afterwards. The opening of the door of the understanding and of the will. V. WHY WE SHOULD DO THIS? The house is His own. The Father who gave it to Him demands this. It was solemnly made over to Him at your baptism. Some will not so much as open the outer door. Others, not the inner door. 1. It is Satan who keeps Christ out. 2. See who it is that seeks admission. The King of glory. 3. How unworthy the house is of Him. 4. Note His condescension—He will come if you open. 5. This offer cost Him dear. 6. Your positions will be one day reversed. 7. You are solemnly called now. 8. The offer will not last always. 9. There is no other way to be saved. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Man's Brother in heaven*:—When we were in Cuba a young woman over at Marianao told us she walked over to Morro Castle every morning. It was a long walk, and she said she did it because her brother was a prisoner there. She had never been inside that castle, and had no interest in it until her brother had been incarcerated there; and then every morning that sister walked all the way from Marianao to the great castle, and looked at it until she could count every stone and knew every tower, and knew the colour of every archway, and recognised the position of every sentry. She was interested in the castle because she had a brother there. We would be interested in heaven's towers, and would count its embattlements, and would love to read about and study it, if we appreciated the value of our Christ who is there. (*R. H. Conwell, D.D.*)

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### PSALM XXV.

**VERS. 1-3. Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.**—*David depressed*:—I. DAVID WAS AT THIS TIME IN A STATE OF GREAT TROUBLE. This is the children's path; it is the path most of God's family walk in. It is not an uncommon path. The Master trod the path before them, and told His people to expect tribulation. In this Psalm we see affliction in every variety. David traces his afflictions up to his sins (ver. 18). All sin is the cause of suffering. If no sin, no suffering. If no body there would be no shadow. There may have been some searching out of peculiar sins. Times of affliction are usually times of deep searching of heart. II. DAVID WAS AT THIS TIME DEPRESSED. The very expression "lift up" implies a previous casting down. Ver. 16, he says, "I am desolate and afflicted." The believer, compared with the unbeliever, is a strong man; he must needs be strong. But the strongest is not always strong. All borrowed strength is of necessity strength that fluctuates. Creature strength is dependent strength, and therefore it is but comparative weakness. Faith's wing does not always soar aloft; love does not always burn brightly. Unbelief always weakens. David looked to his troubles and was depressed. In our afflictions there are two especial dangers—that of despising them, as if they came fortuitously; and the danger of being encumbered and weighed down by them, looking at the circumstances, and not at the God of the circumstances. III. DAVID BETAKES HIMSELF TO HIS REMEDY. The believer

has but one remedy. The world talks of its many remedies, but all are ineffective. A general view of God, in the power of faith and by the power of the Holy Ghost, lifts up the soul. Nothing so lifts us up against soul trouble as when we are enabled to say, "O my God, I trust in Thee." Is there anything above God's promises? Yes, God Himself is above His promises, and the very substance of them. Our trust is in Him. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) *The nature of true prayer:*—This opening sentence is as if David had said, "Let others lift up their souls to vanity, I will dare to be singular, I will lift up my soul to Thee." Holy resolution, blessed determination. I. THE REALISATION AND RECOGNITION OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. II. THE ABSTRACTION FROM THE INFLUENCES OF THE WORLD. "I will lift up my soul." III. THE CONSECRATION AND CONCENTRATION OF ALL THE ENERGIES OF THE MAN. The consecration willing and loving. If the soul be lifted up all the powers are so. IV. THE RESULTS OF SUCH LIFTING UP OF THE SOUL. We shall be—1. Transported with the Divine nearness. 2. Transformed into the Divine likeness. 3. Translated into the Divine presence now and hereafter. (*F. W. Brown.*) *Uplifting the soul:*—It is not easy to do this. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." We may lift up hands and eyes and voices, but it is another thing to uplift the soul. Yet without this there is no real devotion. And the Christian will be no more satisfied than God. This marks the spiritual worshipper. He may have failed in words, but his soul has been lifted up to God. And the spirituality of religion is its enjoyment. It is good to draw near to God. Then we attend on the Lord without distraction. And when such a worshipper comes forth he will recommend Christ to others, and that not without effect. For his profiting will appear unto all men. His face shines. His heart speaks. His life speaks. His character speaks. He cannot but do good, even without design and without effort. (*W. Jay.*) *The uplift of the soul in prayer:*—Gotthold, in his *Emblems*, says, "Doves have been trained to fly from place to place, carrying letters in a basket fastened to their necks or feet. They are swift of flight; but our prayers and sighs are swifter, for they take but a moment to pass from earth to heaven, and bear the troubles of our heart to the heart of God. These messengers no hostile force can detain; they penetrate the clouds, never linger on the way, and never desist until the Most High attends. A tyrant may shut up a godly man in the deepest dungeon, immure him between massive walls, and forbid him all intercourse with his fellow-men, but these messengers he cannot restrain; in defiance of all obstacles they report to the Omniscient the affliction of the victim, and bring back to him the Divine consolation." *The lifting up of the soul to God:*—The names which he gives God are Jehovah and Elohim—the first taken from His nature, the other from His power; and he applieth them to himself, my strong Gods, including the persons of the Trinity. He leadeth us to God in our prayers, Whom have I in heaven but Thee? He that cometh to God must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. 1. First, He must love thee, and then He will defend thee. Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord. Those are foolish who seek His protection, not first having assurance of His love. If He be to thee Jehovah, then shall He also be to thee Elohim. His prayer is signified by his circumscription, "I lift up my soul to Thee"; and his faith, "I trust in Thee." What is prayer but a lifting up of the heart to God, for the heart must first be affected, and then it will frame all the members of the body, and draw them up with it. Whereby it appeareth that there is no prayer or spiritual service acceptable to God but that which comes and is derived from the heart, "My son, give Me thy heart." Ye are praying, but your heart is as the eye of the fool everywhere. Sometimes ye are thinking of the earth, sometimes of your pleasure, sometimes sleeping, sometimes ye know not what ye are thinking. And sometimes your voice is repeating some idle and deaf sounds, your heart no whit being moved, but as a parrot, uttering uncertain sounds, or a bell, sounding it knows not what; so are ye with your mouth praising God, your heart being absented from Him. 2. Next, his faith is not carried about hither and thither, but only fixeth itself upon God. 3. Thirdly, the lifting up of the heart presupposeth a former dejection of his soul. (*A. Symson.*) *Phases of a pious soul:*—I. A PIOUS SOUL RISING TO GOD. An indication of the true elevation of man; what is it? 1. The elevation of the soul, that is, the rational and spiritual nature, that which was the divinity within him. 2. It is the elevation of the soul to God. The soul going up in devout thought, in holy gratitude, in sublime adoration, in moral assimilation to the Infinite Jehovah. 3. It is the elevation of the soul to God by personal exertion. No man can lift up my soul for me. II. A PIOUS SOUL TRUSTING IN GOD.



"O my God, I trust in Thee." What does trust in the Lord imply? 1. A sense of dependency in the truster. 2. A belief in the sufficiency of the trusted. III. A PIOUS SOUL WAITING UPON GOD. "On Thee do I wait all the day." 1. To wait means patience. 2. To wait means hope. 3. To wait means service. IV. A PIOUS SOUL PRAYING TO GOD. "Let none that wait on Thee be ashamed." The prayer, from vers. 3 to 7, falls into two divisions. 1. Prayer for self. (1) Prayer respecting Divine deliverance. (2) Prayer respecting Divine guidance. (3) Prayer respecting Divine remembrance. 2. Prayer for others. (1) For success to the good. (2) For defeat to the wicked. (*Homilist.*)

Ver. 2. *Let me not be put to shame.*—*Deliverance and guidance.*—Trust that was not vindicated by deliverance would cover the face with confusion. "Hopes that breed not shame" are the treasure of him whose hope is in Jehovah. Foes unnamed threaten; but the stress of the petitions in the first section of the Psalm is less on enemies than on sins. One cry for protection from the former is all that the Psalmist utters, and then his prayer swiftly turns to deeper needs. In the last section the petitions are more exclusively for deliverance from enemies. Needful as such escape is, it is less needful than the knowledge of God's ways, and the man in extremest peril orders his desires rightly if he asks holiness first and safety second. The cry in ver. 2 rests upon the confidence nobly expressed in ver. 3, in which the verbs are not optatives, but futures, declaring a truth certain to be realised in the Psalmist's experience, because it is true for all who, like him, wait on Jehovah. True prayer is the individual's sheltering himself under the broad folds of the mantle that covers all who pray. The double confidence as to the waiters on Jehovah and the "treacherous without cause" is the summary of human experience as read by faith. Sense has much to adduce in contradiction, but the dictum is nevertheless true; only, its truth does not always appear in the small arc of the circle which lies between cradle and grave. The prayer for deliverance glides into that for guidance, since the latter is the deeper need, and the former will scarcely be answered unless the suppliant's will docilely offers the latter. The soul lifted to Jehovah will long to know His will, and submit itself to His manifold teachings. "Thy ways" and "Thy paths" necessarily here mean the ways in which Jehovah desires that the Psalmist should go. "In Thy truth" is ambiguous, both as to the preposition and as to the noun. The clause may either mean God's truth (*i.e.* faithfulness) as His motive for answering the prayer, or His truth (*i.e.* the objective revelation) as the path for men. Predominant usage inclines to the former signification of the noun, but the possibility still remains of regarding God's faithfulness as the path in which the Psalmist desires to be led, *i.e.* to experience it. The cry for forgiveness strikes a deeper note of pathos, and, as asking a more wondrous blessing, grasps still more firmly the thought of what Jehovah is and always has been. The appeal is made to "Thy compassions and loving-kindnesses," as belonging to His nature, and to their past exercise as having been "from of old." Emboldened thus, the Psalmist can look back on his own past, both on his outbursts of youthful passion and levity, which he calls "failures," as missing the mark; and on the darker evils of later manhood, which he calls "rebellions," and can trust that Jehovah will think upon him "according to His mercy," and "for the sake of His goodness" or love. The vivid realisation of that Eternal Mercy, as the very mainspring of God's actions, and as setting forth in many an ancient deed the eternal pattern of His dealings, enables a man to bear the thought of his own sins. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. *Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; and teach me Thy paths.*—*Divine authority upon earth.*—All right-minded men will agree with Matthew Arnold's famous saying, that "Conduct is three-fourths of human life." It will be also admitted that the professed aim of all Churches and religious societies is to regulate and improve conduct. Sometimes, alas! orthodoxy, or right opinion, has been put not merely first, but by itself alone as the one chief aim to be enforced by the clergy, and to be accepted by the laity. But it seems only fair to say that these were examples of departure from the original ideal of a Church and its purpose. The claim of Divine authority to control the minds, hearts, and lives of the people, and to interfere even forcibly with individual freedom of thought and action, was designed, in the first instance, for the welfare of society and the moral elevation of its various members, and in that light must not be ruthlessly condemned. But the principle was liable to abuse, and the mischiefs wrought by its abuse have been terrible. They have

been the cause of conflict which will continue as long as the claim of Divine authority is made on the one hand, and the sense of a God-given right to individual freedom remains on the other. What is the mischief that we want to remedy? It is the belief in the "Divine" authority of that which is but "human"; and as a consequence, the separation of the human soul from personal and direct intercourse with God—the substitution, in short, of the human for the Divine. We have these objections to it which are fatal. I. THAT IT IS FALSE. It is sufficient to expose the fallacy of the argument by which the claim of Divine authority is defended. And nothing is easier than this. The Church of Rome asserts, without proof, that God Himself lived on earth in the Person of Jesus, who transmitted, or delegated, His Divine power and authority first to the apostles, and subsequently to the Church founded by them, and to every succeeding head or pope of that Church; and that this Divine authority extends to matters of faith, *i.e.* doctrines to be believed, to rites and ceremonies, and to discipline and morals. Over all these, at least, the authority of the Church is claimed to be identical with the authority of God. But when we reverently ask on what ground we must accept the alleged Divine authority of Jesus, in the first instance, we are distinctly told that we must take all that on the authority of the Church. This is arguing in a circle. II. THE CLAIM IS NEEDLESS. That is to say, men would get on in all things good, in the attainment of truth, in the adoption of religious ceremonies, and in the practice of virtue, quite as well without a divinely instituted Church as with it. It is not hard to show that the absence of belief in the claim to Divine authority has not been generally followed by any detrimental results either to religion or virtue. What is true and good and useful is entirely discoverable without the aid of miraculous revelation. It may be argued, this claim is needful, because the mass of men will not, or cannot, think for themselves; and the vast majority crave for certainty in things Divine, which certainly they cannot attain without the intervention of a divinely appointed authority upon earth. Because men crave for an external authority in matters of faith and duty, does not involve that they really need the authority they desire. (*Charles Voysey, B.A.*) *A prayer for Divine enlightenment*:—The text expresses the sincere desire of every Christian. He feels that he needs a Divine Teacher to enable him to understand Divine truth and obey the Divine precepts. Hence he approaches the fountain of all wisdom with the prayer of the text. I. A PRAYER FOR DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT. 1. The importance of a knowledge of God's ways. 2. A willingness to follow Divine teaching. Every Christian is a learner, conscious of his own ignorance, and anxious to be divinely taught. He is prepared to renounce everything in his creed and conduct not in harmony with the Word of God. 3. A willingness to obey Divine teachings. "Lead me in Thy paths." We must first know God's will, then do it. II. GOD IS THE TEACHER OF HIS PEOPLE. How does He teach? Human spirit can speak with human spirit. Who shall dare to say that the human spirit cannot be communicated with by the Divine? 1. By His Word. 2. By His Spirit. 3. By His providence. III. THE PSALMIST'S METHOD OF OBTAINING THE DIVINE TEACHING. "On Thee do I wait all the day." 1. Wait humbly. 2. Wait earnestly. 3. Wait believingly. 4. Wait perseveringly. 5. God's response to prayer is certain. Let us have confidence in God. If the greatest Being deserves the profoundest reverence; if the kindest Being deserves the heartiest thanks; and if the best of Beings deserves the warmest love, then our highest reverence, thanks, and love are due to God. (*H. Woodcock.*) *Taught in God's ways*:—In this verse are contained—1. The Person whom he implores, Jehovah; whom he describeth, leading him, teaching him, receiving him in favour, and nourishing him (vers. 4, 5, 6, and 7). 2. What he seeks. God's ways. 3. By what means? Teach me, and lead me. 4. The reason. Because Thou art my God, and I trust in Thee. So should pastors do. Who would be a good master, let him be a good apprentice; and this same should all private Christians desire, that God would teach them that way which will please Him best, even His own ways. (*A. Symson.*) *The knowledge of God in His ways*:—Two ways in which we may understand this Psalm. The writer may mean it as a prayer for direction, that he may be taught what to do, how to walk so as to please God. Or that God would declare Himself to the petitioner, and manifest to him what He is doing; that God would show His own ways to David, and teach him the issue of the hidden paths in which he was walking towards Him; not the paths the writer ought to follow, but those which the Almighty was pursuing. Consider this latter view. Such petitions and such complaints are common in the Scriptures, and natural to the heart of man. They are found in the secret thoughts, and not seldom in the expressed prayers of experienced

and advanced Christians. Job was no common adept in the use of grace, and yet he earnestly begs, "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me." Jeremiah was a deeply exercised man, yet he could plainly perceive the difference in his own mind between belief and faith, between principle and practice. He says to God, "Let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments." In the text the Psalmist appears to have the natural feeling more subdued. He cannot tell what God is doing. It is all dark and mysterious, and probably he thought that on that account he could not learn any lesson of wisdom from it : a conclusion which does by no means follow. It is not, "Show me Thy way, O Lord," but ways ; plural, not singular, not as though it were one and definite. What is mysterious, but intricate and manifold, often crossing one another, and apparently inexplicable, on account of seeming contradictions ; not merely such as we do not understand on account of our ignorance, but such as seem impossible to be explained, because of their contrariety in themselves. And in very deed this is often the appearance of the ways of God. They are not only so plural, but so infinite in their plurality ; so intertwined with and intersecting each other that there is reason to believe that if they were fully laid open to our view we would not be able to understand them, so intricate is their network. There is not a circumstance that occurs to ourselves or to others that is not an organised part of God's instrumentality for bringing His purposes to pass. Consider the ways in which God deals with a soul in mercy. 1. In awakening, warning, and opening the eyes. 2. God's ways in securing to Himself the heart of His child on earth are oftentimes perplexing. Discipline may succeed when love fails. 3. The ways in which a soul is led to feel after and find the Lord. No one can tell beforehand of another or of himself what will be the effective way, or what will fail. 4. It is the same in the teaching and building up of a soul. (*G. Jeans, M.A.*) *David's desire in the time of trouble*.—I. THE PETITION. David may have meant, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord, in Thy providence." He may have wished a clearer insight into the great ways of God in His grace. He may have desired to know more distinctly the path in which he should walk. See how earnestly he urges his plea : he has every sort of motive in it. There is the plea of blindness, of ignorance, of utter weakness. II. THE PLEA. 1. "Thou art the God of my salvation." 2. It is the God of MY salvation. 3. He says, "On Thee do I wait all the day," that is, throughout the whole day. Points for consideration. See what the true mark of a spiritual man is. See that God's ways are always deep. His providence—how often it is intricate. The administrations of His grace—how profound they are. 3. See the humbleness of sanctified affliction. Sanctified affliction, because it is quite a mistake to suppose that all affliction is blessed to a child of God. It may ultimately tend to good, but there are many afflictions that are not immediate blessings to him. (*J. H. Evans, M.A.*) O Lord, teach me Thy paths.—*The Lord's paths*.—The wicked say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways ; the good man acknowledges God in everything, and he commits himself entirely to His guidance and guardian care. I. THE PRAYER. The subject of the prayer—"Lord's paths." 1. Paths of Divine providence. Often dark, mysterious—always wise and right and good. 2. Paths of grace. Way of holiness, happiness, &c. Way through the desert to Canaan. Sometimes obscure and clouded. Pillar of cloud necessary. 3. Paths of duty. "Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do ?" Duty and ease, duty and interest, duty and desires, often at variance. The prayer itself is for Divine teaching—"Lord, teach me." Here is an admission of ignorance, of insufficiency, of anxiety, and of application to the right source. "Lord, teach me"—1. Clearly to understand Thy paths. 2. Heartily to approve of them. 3. Constantly to walk in them. Notice.—II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PRAYER. It is important to our intellectual and spiritual improvement. To grow in knowledge, path shine more and more, &c. (2 Pet. i. 5). (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me.—*Guiding and teaching*.—A short but expressive prayer. All need it. We need it when we are surrounded with gloom, when we are tempted, and when we find our path very rough. I. THE PETITION FOR GUIDANCE. We need it because—1. We are ignorant of the future. 2. The way is dark. 3. We need thus to pray, from a deep conviction that we dare not go alone. 4. Because we are so weak. The Psalmist asks that God will lead him according to His own revealed will. "In Thy truth." II. THE PETITION FOR INSTRUCTION. How much we need to learn. How little we know after all these years. We don't know our bodies, still less our souls. We know not about time, how precious it is, but yet less of eternity. How little we know of life or of men.



Therefore we need to pray, "Lord, teach me." (*William Scott.*) **On Thee do I wait all the day.**—*How to spend the day with God:*—Who can truly say this? Who among us lives such a life of communion with God? This waiting is that of patient expectation and constant attendance. God was keeping David in suspense. He could not tell what was the mind and will of God. But he waits continually on Him. And so, in like circumstances, must we. **I. WHAT IS IT TO WAIT UPON GOD?** 1. It is to live a life of desire towards Him. Our desire should be, not only towards the good things God gives, but towards God Himself. 2. It is to live a life of delight in God. Desire is love in motion, as a bird upon the wing. Delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the nest. 3. It is a life of dependence on God, as the child waits on the father. 4. It is a life of devotedness to God, as the servant waits on his master. 5. And it is to make His will our rule; for our practice or for our patience, as the will of His providence may ordain. **II. THIS WE MUST DO EVERY DAY, AND ALL DAY LONG.** 1. Every day. Servants in the courts of princes have their weeks or months of waiting appointed them, and are tied to attend only at certain times; but God's servants must never be out of waiting. Sabbath-days and week-days, idle days and busy days, days of prosperity and of adversity. 2. *Toto die*,—or all the day through. By casting our daily care upon Him. By managing our daily business for Him. Receiving our daily comforts from Him. Resisting our daily temptations, and doing our daily duties, in the strength of His grace. Application: Consider this need of waiting on God at particular times. At family worship. When teaching your children. At shop or business. At meal times. On friendly visits. God waits to be gracious to those who wait on Him. (*Matthew Henry.*) *Waiting on God:*—**I. ILLUSTRATE THE SPIRIT AND MEANING OF THIS VERSE.** 1. It does not mean that David was incessantly occupied with religious exercises. 2. The words are quite consistent with a knowledge of many transgressions. 3. The words involve a figurative meaning. This "waiting" is the spirit of trust, of loving obedience, of hope and confidence, of a most intimate friendship, of the deepest reverence. **II. IN WHAT WAY WOULD A DAY BE SPENT BY ONE WHO SINCERELY UTTERED THESE WORDS?** 1. The day would be begun with God. 2. One who has begun the day with God will remember His presence, and seek His favour through the day. What is wanted of all of us is to carry the habit of religion into our ordinary pursuits. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Prolonged waiting upon God:*—The thoughtless rush before God, in which we expect to get all we covet and away again, is worse than sacrilege. The unapproachable glories cannot be known in the twinkling of an eye. One of Ruskin's pupils once said to him, "The instant I entered the gallery at Florence I knew what you meant by the supremacy of Boticelli." "In an instant, did you?" was the somewhat withering reply. "It took me twenty years to find it out." If we wait before God for a life-time we shall only just begin to feel His enchantments. (*Thomas G. Selby.*)

**Vers. 6, 7. Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies.**—*Things to remember and to forget:*—It is only by a figure of speech that we can speak of God as remembering and forgetting. It is an accommodation to our human weakness and ignorance. He who sees all things at a glance has no need to remember, and is incapable of forgetting. Yet God acts towards us as if He both remembered and forgot, and it is enough for us to think of Him in that way. Here the Psalmist's mind seemed to sway backward and forward between these two words "remember" and "remember not." And so—**I. WE WISH TO BE REMEMBERED BY GOD.** It is sweet to be had in remembrance by friends. No one of us likes to be forgotten. The religious man desires, above all things, to be remembered of God. It is the sign and proof of His sincerity. If there be no serious and solemn purpose in life; if all its aims and motives and actuating impulses are vulgar, sensual, selfish, there will be no wish to have God's eye upon it; there will be a sort of relief in the thought that He takes no notice of it, that He passes it by in forgetfulness. But to one whose endeavours are after the higher life the thought of having no place in God's mind is dreadful. **II. WE ARE HAPPY IN THE THOUGHT THAT GOD REMEMBERS.** But we wish, like the Psalmist, that He could both remember and forget. Memory brought back to David the sins of bygone years. O God, he cried, forget all those crooked and dark things, as I would forget them, and call to mind only Thine own goodness and love. What a strangely mingled cup it is that memory gives us to drink—full to the brim, overflowing with sweetness. Yet we cannot take a deep draught of the cup without coming to bitter ingredients, nay, perhaps to fiery morsels that burn

and blister the mouth. Memory is as the Ebal and Gerizim of our lives. The Psalmist wished to separate these two elements of memory. He was afraid lest God should eternalise those old sins by keeping them in mind. He did not like to remember them himself. He wished to think only of the brighter, lovelier things—the Divine, the promising, the hopeful. O God, forget the evil, that I may forget it too. Yes, forget as far as possible the dark scenes of the years that lie behind. Forget the very sorrows and trials and bereavements, unless, indeed, they are so recent and so acute that it would only mock you to ask you to forget them. Bring with you out of the passing years a large and generous legacy of sweet and pure and holy memories. Be sure that all the mercies which we have ever known, all the Divine love and pity and helpfulness which we have ever proved, all that compassion and sympathy of Jesus Christ which have been our stay, will be repeated in the coming days. He will not forget. (*J. G. Greenhough, M.A.*) *The Divine remembrance*:—An aged Christian, lying on his deathbed in a state of such extreme weakness that he was often entirely unconscious of all around him, was asked the cause of his perfect peace. He replied, “When I am able to think, I think of Jesus; and when I am unable to think of Him, I know he is thinking of me.” *For they have been for ever.*—*The eternity of God’s mercies*:—A fair commendation of God’s mercies from the eternity thereof. His mercies had no beginning, as Himself had none, and shall have no end—From everlasting to everlasting Thou art our God. As the ocean and main sea can never be exhausted, but would furnish water to all the world, if every one should bring vessels to draw water therefrom; so if we have faith and prayer to seek grace from God, He is all-sufficient in Himself to furnish us all. (*A Symson.*) *The antiquity of mercy*:—Let the ancientness of Divine love draw up our hearts to a very dear and honourable esteem of it. Pieces of antiquity, though of base metal, and otherwise of little use or value, how venerable are they with learned men! and ancient charters, how careful are men to preserve them; although they contain but temporary privileges, and sometimes but of trivial moment! How, then, should the great charter of heaven, so much older than the world, be had in everlasting remembrance, and the thoughts thereof be very precious to us; lying down, rising up, and all the day long accompanying us! (*J. Cole.*)

Ver. 7. Remember not the sins of my youth.—*Youthful sins*:—The Psalm belongs to the later days of David. In youth we live in the present; in age we live in the past. I. YOUTHFUL SINS ARE REMEMBERED WHEN THE SINNER ATTAINS TO AN ADVANCED AGE. Generally speaking, the youthful sinner is a thoughtless sinner. He does not trouble about the sin or its consequences. There is a fallacy about, that the sins of youth are not actual sins. If youthful follies gradually developed themselves into manly virtues, then all hail, youthful follies! But if sin always remains sin, and wild oats sown will only grow up wild oats, then this is a fallacy indeed. There comes a time when youthful sins rise up to remembrance, both with the sinner and with the saint. The saint may know that his sins are forgiven, but that does not alter the grief with which he remembers them. How much more sadly true this is of the sinner, who does not know of sin forgiven. There comes a time when old iniquities, long forgotten, shall rise again from the dead, and like spectres haunt the man. There will come a time when the sins of the past will march before you and demand judgment; and what then? II. WHEN IN ADVANCED AGE THE SINS OF YOUTH ARE REMEMBERED, THE CRY OF THE SOUL IS, O GOD FORGET WHAT I MUST REMEMBER. David does not ask that he might forget his sins, but that God would forget them. It would not be well for us to forget them, even when they are forgiven. Are your sins in God’s memory as well as in your own? There are those who have their sins in the memory of God, but not in their own. Others have their sins in their own memory and in the memory of God too. And others have their sins in their own memory, but not in God’s. (*Archibald G. Brown.*) *The sins of youth*:—We have no ground for supposing that the youth of David was sinful in the ordinary sense of the term, that he lived otherwise than “soberly, righteously, and godly”; or that he did not serve God purely, willingly, and lovingly. So far as we know, his offences against God in his youth were but the inevitable faults of his age—shortcomings, indeed, negligences and ignorances, and so things to be deplored and avoided; but there is nothing like any intimation of a vicious youth recorded against him in the Word of God. Nevertheless, there are always undeveloped tendencies towards evil lurking in every youthful heart, and on their encouragement or discouragement the tenor of the

future life depends. The presumption is, that David was no longer young when this Psalm was composed. So we have this lesson, that his penitence and sorrow for sin were not things which, being once expressed, were thought of no more, but that they were ever before him, for years and years after his sins were committed. So must it be with those whose early years are stained with the defilements of sin. Either they will go on as they have begun, adding sin to sin, or they must be content to pass the remainder of their days as mourning penitents. As we sow we shall reap. If we have engaged in a course of sin we must be content to have a course of sorrow afterwards. Is a course of indulgence in any sin whatever worth the miseries into which sin inevitably leads? David is said to be a man after God's own heart; but only because, when he fell, he did not continue in sin. He was not a man after God's own heart *with* his sins, but *without* them, because of his readiness to cast them from him, and of his life-long, loving, trustful penitence afterwards. (*P. E. Paget.*) *The registry gate.*—The true significance of the present is not revealed in the present. The present usually tells us only half truths, and sometimes falsehoods. Only the lapse of years makes us dispassionate judges of our earlier selves. Hence the past comes into our maturer life as an element of pain and reproach. The text is the utterance of a rich and ripe experience—of a man about whom the shadows have begun to lengthen, and who is letting a sorrowful and faultful past come home to his matured judgment, to be tried by its higher standards and by its clearer discrimination. In view of what we know of David's youth, why does he so earnestly plead that the sins of his youth be not remembered by God? The answer is found in the standpoint from which David contemplated his life; for while the cool retrospect of a life brings disappointment and disgust to every thoughtful man, the nature and degree of this disgust are regulated according to the standard of judgment which is applied. The majority of men come, sooner or later, to think of themselves as fools in their earlier years, but they do not likewise come to think of themselves as sinners. When one begins to review his life from the standpoint of his moral relation to God, he sees through a glass which greatly enlarges the range of his retrospect, thoughts as well as deeds, intention as well as performance, motive no less than act—enter into his review. Secret faults come under inspection, with presumptuous sins; what he is not as well as what he is. The truth assumed in these words is one which concerns the character of God, which gives tone to this whole prayer of David, and which it very much concerns us to see as plainly as he did—the truth, that God cannot be passive in any moral relation. Sin cannot come to the notice of God without setting something in motion against itself, any more than the poles of a battery can be brought together, without starting an electric current. God cannot let sin alone. As a Lawgiver, He must take cognisance of violated law. As a Father, He must strive to restore an erring son. As an Administrator, He must anticipate the far-reaching consequences of a violation of moral order. Here men make a vital mistake. They are deceived, and mock God by thinking that He can, by any possibility, be false to His own pure Being. They measure Him by their own standards, and think that their own good-natured tolerance of sin is measured in Him. If a man will once deliberately consider the out-branchings and consequences of a single sin, even in the light of the familiar laws of cause and effect, he will readily see what a stupendous problem is that of forgiveness, and will echo the scribes' question,—“Who can forgive sins but God only?” We are not to expect God will literally shut our sins out of His remembrance. Nor that He will change His attitude towards sin. While God's relation to sin remains fixed, His relation to the sinner may be changed. How, in answer to such a prayer as David's, will man stand related to the follies and sins of his past life? He will not be entirely rid of their consequences, especially of their physical consequences. Nor will God cease to use the faultful past in the new man's education. But He will never taunt him with the past. He wants to use the past only as a help, not as a sting. And into the heart there will come a tranquil rest, a deep peace, founded not upon hope of retrieving the past, for there may be little time left; but simply upon the conviction that God has taken the whole sadly confused and stained life into His own hands. And there will come a turning with fresh zest to redeem the time which remains. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Youth should be given to God.*—The first-born should be sacrificed to God, the first-fruits should be offered to Him, yea, the firstlings of beasts if they had not been redeemed, their necks behoved to have been broken. Think ye not that God hath more respect of the first-fruits of our life than He hath of the first-fruits or firstlings of bullocks? Thou



shouldst consecrate thy beginnings to God with Josiah, who in the morning of his life, even early, began to seek the Lord. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners in the way.**—*The guarantee in God for guidance from God:*—The Psalmist exchanges petition for contemplation; and gazes on the character of God, in order thereby to be helped to confidence in an answer to his prayer. Such alternations of petition and contemplation are the very heart-beats of devotion, now expanding in desire, and now closing on its treasure in fruition. Either attitude is incomplete without the other. Do our prayers pass into such still contemplation of the face of God? I. **THE PSALMIST'S THOUGHT OF GOD.** "Good and upright." God equals here, kind, beneficent. He binds the two quantities together in the feeling of their profoundest harmony. Neither of these reaches its highest beauty and supremest power except it be associated with the other. In the spectrum analysis of that great light there are the two lines; the one purest white of righteousness, and the other tinged with a ruddier glow, the line of love. We are always tempted to wrench the two apart. Hence you get types of religion in which one or the other is emphasised to such a degree as almost to blot out the other. God is love. We cannot make too much of His love, unless by reason of it we make too little of His righteousness. II. **THE CALM CONFIDENCE BUILT ON THIS CONCEPTION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER.** What a wonderful "therefore" that is!—the logic of faith, not of sense. The co-existence of these two aspects in the perfect Divine character is for us a guarantee that He cannot leave men, however guilty they may be, to grope in the dark, or keep His lips locked in silence. The Psalmist does not mean guidance as to practical advantages and worldly prosperity. He means guidance as to the one important thing, the sovereign conception of duty, the eternal law of right and wrong. What is love, in its loftiest, purest, and therefore in its Divine aspect? What, except an infinite desire to impart, and that the object on which it falls shall be blessed. God is the "giving" God. Not our happiness, but our rectitude, is God's end in all that He does for us. Since righteousness is blended with love, therefore He comes, and must desire to bring all wanderers back into the paths which are His own. God can find His way to my heart, and infuse there illumination, and pure affections, and make my eye clear to discern what is right. III. **THE CONDITION ON WHICH THE FULFILMENT OF THIS CONFIDENCE DEPENDS.** "The meek WILL HE GUIDE," &c. The condition of our hearing and profiting by the guidance is meekness; or what we might call docility, of which the prime element is the submission of our own wills to God's. The reason why we go wrong about our duties is mainly that we do not supremely want to go right, but rather to gratify inclinations, tastes, or passions. Some of us do not wish to know what God wishes us to do. Some of us cannot bear suspense of judgment, or of decision, and are always in a hurry to be in action, and think the time lost that is spent in waiting to know what God the Lord will speak. If you do not clearly see what to do, then clearly you may see that you are to do nothing. Wait till God points the path, and wish Him to point it, and hush the noises that prevent your hearing His voice, and keep your wills in absolute submission; and, above all, be sure that you act out your convictions, and have no knowledge of duty which is not represented in your practice, and you will get all the light which you need: sometimes being taught by errors, no doubt, often being left to make mistakes as to what is expedient in regard to worldly prosperity, but being infallibly guided as to the path of duty and the path of peace and righteousness. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Our Divine Teacher:*—Men die for lack of knowledge, hence teaching has ever held a high place in God's dealing with sinful man, and the Divine Teacher—the Holy Spirit—not only points out the way of life, but confers power to pursue that way. The first without the second would prove ineffective to accomplish the salvation of any man. "It would have been," says T. G. Selby, "a cruel absurdity if some one had stepped up to Caliban or to Quasimodo, the dwarf in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame*, who impersonates all ugliness, and had said "Be Apollo, he is the one mould of physical perfection into which you may try and compass yourself." It would be insane stupidity if Tadema or Burne Jones were to go to some limbless monstrosity in a penny show and say, "Join our school, paint according to our methods, reproduce our best characteristics." The poor wretch lacks the natural endowments which fit him to take his first lessons in art. *The meditation of a devout soul upon God:*—God guides the soul in a certain way. What is it? I. IT IS THE WAY OF MORAL EXCELLENCE. It is described as—1. "Judgment," *i.e.* rectitude. 2. "His

way," the way which is in accordance with their nature. 3. "His covenant." All these expressions mean holiness, for thereinto doth God guide the soul. II. OF EXPERIMENTAL BLESSEDNESS. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy" (ver. 10). 1. They experience the mercy of God in their use. In healing their diseases, sustaining their existence, removing their perplexities, &c. 2. The truth of God in their use. "Mercy and truth." III. OF FORGIVENESS. "Pardon mine iniquity," &c. (ver. 11). 1. There is an urgent need for pardon; and—2. A sovereign reason,—"Thy name's sake." IV. OF MORAL WEALTH. Such wealth is—1. Abundant. "His soul shall dwell at ease." He shall lodge in goodness, as the margin has it. 2. Permanent, "dwell." 3. Transmissible. "His seed shall inherit the earth." A truly good man can transmit his goodness to his children, and bring them into the spiritual inheritance. And these—not the owners of broad acres—are the true inheritors of the earth. 4. Free. "What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him," &c. It does not matter who he is, if he has true religion. V. OF DIVINE FRIENDSHIP. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The man who walks in this way gets so intimate and grows so friendly with God that he becomes initiated into His secrets, acquainted with His counsels. There is no mystery in this. We see it every day where there is strong mutual sympathy between two minds. VI. OF ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE. "He shall pluck my feet out of the net." 1. Men are entangled in dangers. The devil has laid his snares in all directions. 2. True men will be delivered. The "net" will be broken, the snarer confounded, and the soul set free. 3. For their eyes are ever towards the Lord. God fills up the horizon of a good man's soul. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 9. *The meek will He teach His way.*—*The humble*:—The heathen moralists give many admirable counsels, but always forget humility. They had not, indeed, the word for it. The term "humility" before Christianity meant what is base, despicable, vile. Humility can only come with the knowledge of one's self, and man did not truly know himself until he had made a study of himself in the light of the holy God. Comparing himself only with his fellow-men, he would never learn humility. There is something still more efficacious than the sight of the perfection of Jesus Christ to produce humility, it is the sight of His love. It is at the foot of the Cross humility is born. Christian humility should penetrate our entire being. Our intelligence must be humble. We are in danger of forgetting this in this age of criticism and discussion. Only that intelligence which humbles itself before God can readily teach. Our heart must be humble. We can submit our intelligence entirely to God, sacrifice our reason to Him, boast of a blind faith, and shelter in our hearts a whole world of pride. So far as humility has not yet reached and conquered our heart, it is but a theory. It happens, in the Church, that the men to whom God has dispensed the finest gifts advance in humility in the same measure as they advance in age and experience. Consider the promises which God makes to the humble. "The meek will He teach His way." Unless man be taught he will never find God's way. To-day man's intelligence has assumed an immense and superb confidence in itself. It has faith in its powers; it thinks that it has come to an end of all problems, that it will surmount every obstacle. It is not in the power of ignorance and mediocrity to produce humility; very often they nourish pride. Let intelligence grow, but let it never forget its dependence on God. People talk of the benefits of trial. Yes, when it is accepted in humbleness of heart: otherwise it will rather harden. It is a marvellous thing that God has never wanted to be served by the strong, but always by the humble. Pass in review all those who have served His designs, all those by whom He has taught and saved men, you will see that they all have been formed in the school of humility. Let, then, those who work for God lay hold on the thought that to humble souls alone has God taught the way of success. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *The humble taught the Lord's way*:—The righteous Lord will teach sinners His way; but the sinners, in order to be thus divinely taught, must be humble. Men are comparatively little attracted by the more quiet and passive virtues of life, and among these the virtue of humility is one of the least popular. The truth is, that we are still under the influence of pagan notions about it. The philosophers of the past never understood it. Christianity has transformed and ennobled the despised word by giving us the thing itself. In Christ we see that humility makes no man contemptible. The words before us present this virtue of humility under one special aspect. Man has something to learn, and God has something to teach, and humility is *teachableness*. Humility is the result of self-knowledge, and this cannot be obtained until

man has learned to know himself in the light of God's wisdom and holiness. So long as he compares himself with his fellow-creatures around him, it may seem to him that there is no necessity for such an element of character as this. God teaches us humility in another way. He shows us His love in Christ. How can we be proud when we know that God has loved us, and that Christ has died for us? The very faith which accepts the Gospel has its root in lowliness of mind. All our Christian life, in one aspect of it, is a growth in humility. This beautiful virtue affects our whole being, rescuing for God all that has been usurped by sin. Our reason must be humble. Our heart must be humble. Our conduct must be humble. God's promise to "teach His way" applies to our knowledge of Divine truth; the everyday dispensations of life; our bearing towards others; and to our Christian work. (*Clement Bailhache.*)

Ver. 10. **All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.**—*The dealings of God with His people:*—This text is intended to represent a universal attribute of God, in all His ways in His government of the world. As such it sets before us an important element of strength to the Christian. To the saved, every event, of whatsoever kind or magnitude it may be, or seem to be, is under the ordering of one sole guiding hand, and is a token of mercy and truth. I. **THE ASCRIPTION OF MERCY AND TRUTH TO ALL THE PATHS OF THE LORD.** Mercy in sparing and delivering His people when they do not deserve it. Truth, in that it is in accordance with promise. His Word will in the end be found faithful to the letter, and whoever takes his stand on that shall never be ashamed. There is a close connection between the Word of God and His paths. There is a great deal implied in the word "paths": in all the events of the world we may see God moving, see by faith, that is; for His paths are in the deep waters, obliterated from view in the very act of making; His footsteps are not known, except as revealed to the spirit by the Spirit. Whatever comes to us is a path of God. For the illustration of this idea, see the events of David's history. You cannot unravel the web of Providence; but this is certain, "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." II. **THE PERSONS IN WHOM THIS ATTRIBUTE OF GOD'S ACTS IS VERIFIED.** "Unto such as keep His covenant." Hereby is intended such as have come out from their worldly conversation, and are endeavouring to run the race of God's children as Christians in the world. The lowest may be said in some sense to "keep His covenant." The highest do not keep it perfectly. What of the remainder? (*G. Jeans, M.A.*) *The covenant:*—I. **THE SPIRITUAL COVENANTER.** We have heard of the old Covenanters of Scotland. I have a picture of one. But we have to speak of those who at this day keep the covenant of the Lord. The first covenant with our first father Adam shuts up the soul in despair. But there is a new and better covenant. God has shown it to us, and written it on the tablets of our heart. The redeemed man has been the subject of a special call, and is now united to God in Christ Jesus. A true covenanter says, "Sooner death than false of faith." II. **THE COVENANTER'S NOTABLE EXPERIENCE.** "All the paths of the Lord are mercy," &c. So, then, the Lord makes many approaches to covenanting men. I like the word "paths," for it seems to say that the Lord has walks of His own. He makes them for Himself, and comes along them quietly, taking us at unawares. And they are all of mercy and truth. That is to say, God has always shown the truth of His Word. To this rule there is no exception. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The interpretive value of obedience:*—The text seems, at first, to mean that the Lord is merciful and faithful to such as do His will. They shall have His blessing. As they deal with Him, so will He with them. There is a covenant, a spiritual contract, between them: on the one hand, so much obedience and loyalty; on the other, so much truth and mercy. This conception is drawn from the transactions of the market, and in its lowest terms puts religion on the level of mere sale and barter. There is, indeed, an element of truth in it; see Gal. iv. 7, 8. It is certain, however, that they who work just to be rewarded by God will miss it altogether. The true reward is the approval of God, and they alone will gain it who think more of God than of themselves. This is the distinction made in New Testament between faith and works. The difference is seen by comparing Jacob's bargain with St. Francis Xavier's "My God, I love Thee, not because I hope for heaven thereby," &c. The Christian saint gives everything and asks nothing. I do not believe, however, that the text teaches that we are to obey God in order that He may be merciful and true to us. The meaning, I take it, is rather that those who obey Him are thereby



enabled to understand His ways, and to see, even when the paths of the Lord are blind and steep, that they are, nevertheless, the paths of mercy and truth. They who keep the covenant and the testimonies of God have their eyes opened to know the purpose and motive of God's acts. The secret of the Lord, the understanding of His strange dealings with us, is open and plain to those who are near to Him, who fear Him with the fear of devout reverence, and obey Him in the keeping of His covenant and testimonies. I. THIS IS PLAIN ENOUGH IN OUR RELATION TO THE WORLD OF NATURE. How shall we come into complete harmony of eye and ear and touch with our environment; how shall we see the "desirable, clear light of the new morning," and listen fitly to the music of the brooks; how shall we so conduct ourselves that the sun and the rain, the clouds and trees and stars, the sights and sounds of nature, shall give us the satisfaction and benediction that God intends? The way is as evident as it is simple and homely: we must keep the covenant and the testimonies of God as they relate to our daily health of body; we must sleep and eat and work aright; we must answer the fitting, natural demands of our physical being, and keep ourselves alert and strong and well. Nothing else will avail. No amount of beautiful poetry read by lamplight, and no prayers said behind closed doors, can take the place of that imperative obedience to the primitive laws of bodily health by which alone we may hope to look through clear eyes upon this fair and wonderful world. II. THIS EVERLASTING FACT OF THE INTERPRETIVE VALUE OF OBEDIENCE HOLDS TRUE IN RELIGION AS IN EVERYTHING ELSE. The Bible is never weary of teaching it. It is one of the eternal principles that lie at the heart of spiritual truth. The ten lepers who are cleansed as they obey are representatives of all of us: as we go along the way on which God sends us, strength and health of soul go with us. The pure in heart shall see God. They who are devoted to God, who hold all else subordinate to their service of Him, whose love of Him is the supreme fact in their lives, who live in His conscious presence, see Him and understand Him. It is as simple and natural as friendship. Their obedience opens their eyes. The chosen disciples of Jesus were able to understand Him better than the crowd, because they were keeping, as best they could, though with many blunders, the eternal laws which expressed His own will and way. He was interpreted to them by their obedience. We, too, if we would know Him, must approach Him by this way. Not by the path of reason, perplexing ourselves among the arguments of theologians; and not by the path of authority, taking what the ecclesiastics tell us and thinking no more about it, like a blind man trying to understand a sunrise by a formula; but by the path of personal obedience is Christ best sought, so that, doing His will, we come into real sympathy with Him, and of our own selves recognise Him and believe in Him and love Him. So it is with certain hard duties to which He summons us, and which are tests of true discipleship. To love our enemies seems at first not only a difficult but an unnatural and unreasonable affection. It appears like an injustice to our friends. We say flatly, we cannot do it. And the other devout exercises which are of a piece with it, such as speaking as well as we honestly can of those who speak ill of us, and turning the other cheek, and going two miles for those who would compel us to go one, and doing good to those who spitefully use us, the more we simply talk or think about these requirements of Jesus, the more impossible they seem. But when we stop discussing, and obey; when in this or that immediate instance we do the Master's will, hard as it is, going out of our way to render a kind service to one who has injured us, forbearing to defend our rights, giving up our own strong case and letting our importunate neighbour have his way, actually permitting him to take advantage of us if he will; when we simply do what Jesus tells us to do, and what He Himself was for ever doing, then the blessed light shines out upon us, and we understand how this Christian behaviour is not only the best thing in a vague and general way for society, but is the very best for us in particular, and there is a consciousness of the approbation of God, and a new and consequent joy in living, which is far better than any advantage we might have gained by pushing in ahead. We keep the covenant and the testimonies of God, and our obedience interprets them, and it is made plain and sure to us that His paths are truth and mercy. Or, to take another illustration, misfortune of some kind befalls us, grief attends us, the world goes wrong, the light of life is turned of a sudden into black darkness, and a sore burden, too heavy, we think, for us to bear, is set upon our shoulders, and it is desperately hard to see how the paths of the Lord are "mercy." They may be "truth," they may be right; we may be punished for our sins; but how they can mean "mercy," how there can be any

fatherly love in them, as the Gospel tells us, passes our understanding. Then, if we betake ourselves to philosophy, there is but cold and scanty comfort. A wise man wrote a book on the consolations of philosophy, and another wise man advises us to "be revenged upon fate by becoming philosophers"; excellent counsel for the minor perplexities and vexations that beset us. But under a black sky, when things are not only amiss, but dreadfully and tragically amiss, it is a weary and unsatisfying occupation. We cannot by our understanding find out the ways of God. What shall we do, then? Let us submit and obey. Let us take up the new burden and carry it, facing life anew under these strange and hard conditions, and seeking to do our daily duty in it, keeping the covenant and the testimonies of the Lord. That is the way that leads to light. So it is throughout, in every alternative; everything comes right if we obey God. This very world in which we live our daily lives is already heaven to those who do the will of God as it is done in heaven. Here and to-day, they who keep the commandments receive the blessing of which Jesus assured us; they enter into life. (*George Hodges, D.D.*)

Ver. 11. *For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.*—*A prayer for pardon, and its plea*.—The context shows that this is the prayer of a man who had long loved and served God. Yet side by side with this consciousness of devotion and service there lie the profound sense of sin, and of the need of pardon. This consciousness of transgression and cry for pardon are inseparable and permanent accompaniments of a devout life all along its course, but they are the roots and beginnings of all godliness. As a rule, the first step which a man takes to knit himself consciously to God is through the gate of recognised and repeated and confessed sin, and imploring the Divine mercy. I. THE CRY FOR PARDON. There are two elements in forgiveness. There is the forgiveness known to law and practised by the law-giver. And there is the forgiveness known to love, and practised by the friend, or parent, or lover. The one consists in the remission of external penalties. But there is a forgiveness deeper than legal pardon. We must carry both of these ideas into our thoughts of God's pardon, in order to get the whole fulness of it. Scripture recognises as equally real and valid, in our relations to God, the judicial and the fatherly side of the relationship. II. THE PLEA FOR PARDON. "For Thy name's sake." 1. The mercy of God flows from the infinite depths of His own character. He is His own motive. He forgives because He is God. 2. The past of God is a plea with God for present forgiveness. "Thy name" in Scripture means the whole revelation of the Divine character. 3. The Divine forgiveness is in order that men may know Him better. Nothing reveals the sweetness of the Divine name like the assurance of His pardon. III. THE REASON FOR THIS EARNEST CRY. "For it is great." That may be a reason for the pardon; more probably it is a reason for the prayer. The fact is true in regard to us all. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A prayer and a plea*.—Consider this prayer. I. IT IS AN UNRESERVED CONFESSION OF SIN. 1. As his own. 2. As great. In both respects men fail in such confession. They acknowledge sin in general, but not as their own; or they extenuate and excuse it. II. A HUMBLE APPLICATION FOR MERCY. The unregenerate man will not thus humble himself, but will trust to his good works and his fancied good deservings. III. THE PLEA URGED. "For Thy name's sake." It is drawn from God, not from himself. It looks to the Saviour, who is the manifestation of God's name. Let this be our only plea. IV. THE STRONG FAITH OF THIS PRAYER. David believed that God would forgive though his sin were great. Most people see God as all mercy or all wrath. Not so David. Have we such holy faith? (*T. Cooper.*) *A plea for pardon*.—I. A CONFESSION OF SIN. We shall be induced to make such a confession, if we consider that—1. Our sins are great in number. How often do we offend! How many have been the follies of our childhood, the crimes of our youth, and the backslidings of our riper age! 2. Our sins are great in their turpitude. This appears from the Being against whom sin is committed; from the dignity and circumstances of its subjects, from the degrading character which it sustains, and from the awful effects which it produces. 3. Our sins are great in their demerit. The punishment due to sin must be in proportion to the majesty and glory of God, whose dignity it daringly insults, and whose law it impiously violates. II. AN APPROPRIATE REQUEST FOR PARDON. 1. The language of genuine repentance. 2. The language of devout solicitude. 3. The language of humble confidence. III. AN ARGUMENT URGED TO OBTAIN SUCCESS. It suggests—1. The pardon of sin displays the glory of the Divine perfections. God's name signifies His nature. 2. The pardon of sin demonstrates

the efficacy of Christ's atonement. 3. The pardon of sin exemplifies the truth of the sacred Scriptures. In conclusion, warn the careless, encourage the penitent, and congratulate the saints, who have received the "knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins." (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*) *Confession and absolution* :—I. CONFESSION IS TO BE MADE DISTINCTLY AND DIRECTLY, AND ONLY TO THE LORD. There were priests and prophets in those days, but David unfolds the story of his sin to God Himself. He realises that all sin is directly aimed at God. Observe in David's confession the utter absence of excuses. In this confession there is no mention of punishment. David does not ask to be let off. He asks for pardon solely and simply. And David had a true conception of the heinousness of sin. II. A PLEADING PRAYER. Two pleas. The first he finds in God. "For Thy name's sake." He was God's own child, and he pleads his sonship. The second he finds in his own sinfulness. Many mistake by asking pardon because the iniquity is small. The strongest plea is to say to God, "Have mercy upon me, for I am a great sinner. I have sinned in a thousand ways, and even ten thousand times." True confession brings the true absolution. (*Thomas Spurgeon.*)

*The prayer for pardon* :—I. THE PRAYER FOR PARDON. The Psalm is an appeal for Divine guidance amidst the perplexity of life. But the author is driven to think of his unworthiness to receive it because of past perverseness. Are we not all thus placed? The reason why many are lost in the mazes of doubt is because they have not humbled themselves to penitence. II. THE GROUNDS OF THE PRAYER FOR PARDON. 1. God's faithfulness. The "name" God is used constantly as synonymous with His character. Forgiveness is a Divine disposition as well as an act. God is acting in accordance with His own nature in listening to this prayer. The words not only suggest God's character, but His word. "For Thy name's sake" means for Thy honour, who hast pledged Thy word. 2. The suppliant's need. "For it is great." This is an argument that needs no mastering. For who cannot expatiate on his needs! Rejoice in the knowledge that the very thing which dismays thee, O sinner,—the greatness of thy offence,—may be used as a reason why God should forgive thee. At the door of our good and bountiful Lord the plea of utter destitution will ensure relief. The wretchedness of thy crushed condition beneath a mountain load of guilt will stir the Divine compassion. (*Walter Hawkins.*)

*A true mark of a penitent* :—A true mark of a penitent sinner, to aggravate his sin. Some use to extenuate their sins by comparing them with the sins of others, which they think far greater than theirs are; others excuse them, as Adam did when he said, The woman which Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat; she again excused herself, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. But let the children of God search and find out the greatness of their sins, and aggravate them, that God may extenuate and so forget them. Are ye laden with sin? remember it, and God will forget it, and ease you; if ye have it before your eyes He shall cast it behind His back; but if you think nothing of sin, God will bind it on your back, so that it shall press you down as a millstone. (*A. Symson.*) *A strange plea* :—We should not expect a criminal before an earthly judge to advance such a plea as this. Yet before the highest Judge of all this is the argument, the wise argument, of the awakened soul. We should not value God's pardon when obtained if we thought lightly of our sin. When our eyes are opened to see the extent of our ruin we can turn this appalling discovery into the argument of the text. These words represent a real personal conviction of sin. We are ready enough to accept such a statement about our sins, without the slightest degree of humility or penitential sorrow. Consider what it is that makes sin great. I. IT IS GREAT ACCORDING TO THE POSITION IT OCCUPIES IN THE MORAL SCALE. There is a subjective as well as an objective measure of sin. Each sin may be judged in the abstract according to its heinousness; but when it is committed we have to consider the conditions under which it was committed. Its guilt must depend on a variety of considerations. Two offenders may commit precisely the same offence, and yet one may be morally much guiltier than the other. II. SIN IS GREAT, IN PROPORTION TO THE ADVANTAGES AND PRIVILEGES OF THE SINNER. Many will not admit this. Respectable church-going people plume themselves on their privileges, as though the possession of these might be accepted as a proof that their own spiritual condition could not be otherwise than satisfactory. III. SIN IS GREAT, IN CONSIDERATION OF THE CHARACTER OF THOSE AGAINST WHOM IT IS COMMITTED. The exceeding sinfulness of sin lies in its being an offence against infinite love revealed. IV. SIN IS GREAT, IN PROPORTION TO ITS FREQUENCY. If a man is proved to be a confirmed criminal, then you may be sure



that the heaviest sentence the law allows will be meted out to him. How often have we sinned against God! V. SIN IS GREAT IN PROPORTION TO THE AMOUNT OF DELIBERATE INTENTION WITH WHICH IT IS COMMITTED. Some of our sins are the result of a momentary temptation, and may be attributed to a passing weakness. This may extenuate our guilt. But we cannot speak thus of the determined, deliberate, and resolute resistance that we have offered to the pleadings of the Holy Ghost in our souls. The text contains another plea, "For Thy name's sake." Our hope lies there. It is the glory of God to undertake our case when it is desperate, and He shows His almighty power most chiefly by showing mercy and pity. The moral glory of God shines out more, so far as we can judge, in pardoning a sinner than in making a world. And we honour His name most when we trust Him to do this. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *Contrition*:—God's principal aim is to bring us all to feel that our iniquity is great. I. DAVID DECLARED THAT HIS WAS GREAT. What is it that makes our sin great? 1. Against whom it has been committed. 2. That it is offence against most just and equitable law. 3. That we who owe so much to God should sin against Him. Think of the number of your sins and the lack of all provocation. We have sinned for sinning's sake. And we have gone on in sin after we have known and felt the evil of it. II. THERE IS A PLEA IN THE VERY GREATNESS OF OUR SINS. The pith of the whole text lies in the words which we forget to quote—"For Thy name's sake." The confession is an argument now. There is a valid plea here. If salvation were by merit, then the least offender would get off best. But it is all by grace; and hence the greater the pardon, the greater the glory of that grace in bestowing it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The cry for pardon*:—I. THE CONFESSION. "Mine iniquity, for it is great." The confession of a regenerate man: the spirit teaches and prompts. The natural man excuses, palliates, minimises his sin; uses false weights and measures. Our view depends on distance, position, light, and medium. God views according to unerring standard, and in clearest light; so more and more does the spirit-taught soul. Sense of sin grows as we come nearer to God. This confession is not vague, unmeaning, mere form. Take one sin—any one—and look at it in the light; weigh it in the scales; it is great. Consider the magnitude and multitude of your sins. II. THE PRAYER. "Pardon." Appeal from law to grace; of these there can be no mixture. Great sins do not bar this appeal. Great sin means great need. No extenuating circumstances can be urged; none are needed. Pardon is free, immediate, complete, and continual. III. THE PLEA. "For Thy name's sake." All self-merit is disowned. God delights to pardon. God has promised to pardon. God's name, character, word, promise, covenant are all involved in hearing prayer—this prayer. Christ is the embodiment of the Divine name for sinners, and the sinner's plea with God. (*James Smith, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. What man is he that feareth the Lord?—*The fear of God a restraining influence*:—This secret fear, if it be once planted in the heart, will direct thee in all good actions acceptable to God, and correct thy evil doings. The love of God hath a constraining power whereby it compelleth and forceth us to serve Him: the fear of God hath a restraining power, by which it restraineth and stayeth us, and keepeth us back from offending Him: this is like a bit, that like a spur. Abraham feared that the fear of God was not in the place whereto he went. Joseph being enticed by his mistress to commit wickedness with her, answered, How can I do this great wickedness, and so sin against God? The Lord plant this fear in our hearts. This is a filial fear which he craveth, coming from love, and not a servile fear, which cometh from fear of punishment. The preserver of this fear in thee is a continual nourishment in thy mind of the presence of God, to whom thou presentest all thy actions. Will He teach the way that he shall choose. He promiseth four benefits to the man that feareth God,—He heapeth upon him grace upon grace: before He pardoned him, and now He directeth the man whom He forgave: for no sooner receiveth He any man in His favour, but He immediately takes the protection and direction of him. But out of these words we see three things. First, that there are divers, yea contrary ways, as there are contrary ends, the broad and the narrow, the King's way and by-roads, the way of life and of death. This is against such as dream to themselves that whatsoever religion they profess, or howsoever they live, they shall go to heaven; but they are deceived, for if thou be not in the way to the kingdom thou shalt never attain to the kingdom; many, yea the most part, are not going but riding, not running but posting, to hell; of whom, if it be demanded whither they go? they will answer, to heaven; yea, and they will brag that they are nearer

God than the preacher himself, even as if one should dream of life at the point of death. Next, we see that a man cannot of himself choose the right way to heaven; for the natural man cannot apprehend those things which appertain to God's kingdom, neither yet can he see them, for they are spiritually discerned. Whereupon followeth the third, that is, how man shall choose the good and refuse the evil way. It is not in him that runneth, nor in him that willet, but in God that sheweth mercy. Moses chose rather to suffer with the Church than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (*A. Symson.*) *The fruits of godly fear*:—The "fear of God" is a familiar expression in the Scriptures. Let us lay hold of one element in the spacious word. When we profoundly fear a thing we are haunted by it. It affects everything. To fear God is to be God-haunted, God-possessed. But this figure is defective. In all fruitful fear of God there is no cringing, no slavishness, no paralysing terror. Perfect love "casteth out" this type of fear. Change the figure. We speak of being haunted by an air of music. In such a way the man who fears God is haunted by God's presence; God is an abiding consciousness. Everything is seen in relationship to God. What would be the fruits of such a fear? The succeeding verses give some outline of the spacious ministry. "Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose." He shall be guided in his choices. He shall have the gift of enlightenment. His discernment shall be refined so as to perceive the right way when the ways are many. His moral judgment shall be instructed. The moral choice shall be firm and sure. The practical judgment shall be nurtured and refined in the Lord's school. "His soul shall dwell at ease." Restlessness and worry shall be abolished. The sense of the companionship of God will make every place the realm of promise, and in every place he will find the riches of grace. "His seed shall inherit the earth." Children become heirs when parents become pious. The God-possessed transmits a legacy of blessing. It would be a profitable thing to calculate what one may inherit because another man was good. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." They are taken into intimate fellowship. To be made the depository of a rare secret is to be sealed as a friend. How can we become God-haunted? Let us begin by deliberately consulting God in the individual movements of our busy life. Refer everything to His decision. Begin by distinct acts of volition. This may become at length an easy-fitting habit, and may even ripen into the spontaneity of an instinct. (*J. H. Jowett, M.A.*)

Vers. 14. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*—*The secret of the Lord*.—Then the Lord has a secret. Why does He not tell it to every man? Why do we not tell our secrets to every man? Every man does not understand us. We always best understand those who are like-minded with us. God gives His secret to them that fear Him. We individually give our secret—knowledge of our inner self—to those who see eye to eye with us, and by so much would not, cannot, offend us. That which must necessarily be a secret to some, even knowledge of ourselves, is, all else being equal, most obtainable by them that fear us; by them who put confidence in us. It is even so with society; its secret is with them that fear it. Outrage the moral sense of society, or even its sense of propriety, and refuse to be reconciled, and society will cast you adrift. He who acquiesces in the ways of society is received by society, and gets from it such secret as it has to reveal. He knows society through reconciliation, through a species of fear, in which there is an admixture of love. The secret of business is with him who bends his will to it. The secret of all science, and all art, is with them that love it. No love, no secret, in personal intercourse, in industrial pursuits, in society. The more love, the more knowledge or secret. Admiration, devotion, love, each according to its nature and degree opens all locks and doors and souls. Have the spirit of any given man, and his secret is yours. Have his spirit entirely, and you have him. Harmony with God, sympathy, animation by His Spirit is necessary to knowing Him. (*J. S. Swan.*) *The secret of the Lord*.—I. THE CLASS OF PERSONS SPOKEN OF. Those that "fear the Lord." 1. Fear sometimes signifies fear of God's punishments. This fear is better than none at all, as it exercises a restraining power over men who would otherwise commit sin. 2. But there is a fear which merits the severest reprobation: when it fears God because it considers Him to be an angry, vindictive being. 3. There is a fear which deserves the highest commendation; it is filial fear, the fear which an affectionate child has of grieving its father, or causing him pain. II. THE PRIVILEGE WHICH SUCH PERSONS ENJOY. "The secret of the Lord is with them." God holds communion and fellowship with men whose hearts are rightly disposed

towards them. Suppose a group of persons discussing the conduct and policy of some public man. All kinds of opinions might be expressed, favourable or otherwise. But of what worth would they be compared with the word of one who knows this public man personally, intimately, who is in his secret, and can speak with confidence regarding his public conduct? Or the "secret" may be illustrated in another way—by the relation in which two friends stand to each other, who are in perfect sympathy with one another. How they would understand each other! A glance of the eye, a mere hint, suffices to reveal the mind of the one to the other. So the favour and fellowship of God are enjoyed by the man who fears Him. What do we know about this "secret"? The infidel Hume taunted his servant with believing in nonsense. He replied that in his *History of England* Hume told of Queen Mary, who said that when she died, Calais would be found written on her heart. So, the servant said, Christ was written on his heart. This is the secret of the Lord. (*W. Logan, M.A.*) *The teachings of God within and without*:—God reveals Himself in two ways to man. God wrote His word "on the pages of the elements." But even on the heathen He wrote a more inward law, which answered to the outward and interpreted its voice—the law of conscience. Each of these voices is made more distinct as man is brought nearer to God. And when we forget both, He has given us the writings of the law, the voices of the prophets, the melody of the Psalms, the instruction of Proverbs, the experiences of histories, the words of Jesus and the Apostles. He speaks, too, by His Spirit. God ever speaks to the heart, as He speaks through the Word; for He cannot contradict Himself. What then? Because God must prepare the heart and open the ear and Himself speak to it, does nothing depend on us? It is with us to hearken or no. "The secret of the Lord" is a hushed voice, a gentle intercourse of heart to heart, a still small voice whispering to the inner ear. How should we hear it if we fill our ears and our hearts with the din of this world? There are two conditions, as there are degrees of inward hearing. You must fear God. You must be hushed yourselves. They who do not fear God cannot hear the secret. In grace, God forecomes man, and man follows grace given. In sin, on the contrary, man begins; he casts out grace, deadens his own ear, until God's voice sounds fainter and fainter. The question on which all hangs is this—is the flesh subdued to the Spirit, or the Spirit stifled by the flesh? This is the first condition of knowing the will of God, that we will to know it wholly. In vain is heaven opened to eyes fixed on earth. Love sees God. . . . The Psalmist speaks not of the "secret of the Lord" only, but of a "secret converse" with the soul, as of a friend with his friend. To have the love of the Great Friend, we must desire no love out of Him. St. Bernard says, "A secret counsel calleth for a secret hearing. He will assuredly make thee hear of joy and gladness if thou receivest Him with a sober ear." "They who would behold God," says St. Gregory, "dwell in a loneliness of soul, and free from the tumults of worldly cares, thirst for God." (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *The knowledge of God revealed to them that fear Him*:—The secret of the Lord means, that which cannot be known unless the Lord reveal it. And the phrase here implies an intimate knowledge of the Divine perfections, of the dealings and dispensations of God; a holy and vital communion with Him; an entire trust in His providential care and government, together with that peace which always dwells in the bosom of a true, penitent, pious believer. All this, including, as it does, a full acquaintance with the doctrines and duties, the privileges and comforts of the life of faith, is called the "secret of the Lord," for man naturally knows nothing of them (Prov. ii. 6, 9; 1 Cor. ii. 9). Men think all this enthusiasm, and have no notion that there is anything in religion which they, by their own skill, are not competent to discover. But, for instance, how can any man who neglects the worship of God pretend to decide upon its importance or utility? It is a matter of experience, and he is unqualified to judge. Because the sinner, when overtaken by sickness or affliction, declares that he derives no comfort from religion, are we therefore to conclude that religion has no comforts to bestow? The promises of the Gospel belong to them that fear the Lord. These persons, when they read the Scriptures, are blessed through them; theirs, too, is the secret of peace in the midst of trouble and in the hour of death. (*T. Slade, M.A.*) *The reward of fear*:—Think what God's secret told to a man must be. I. IT MUST BE ONE OF KNOWLEDGE. You all know what the Bible is to the natural heart. It gives information, much and valuable, about most important things. But there it ends. It does not touch us, does not move us, does not make us feel. But see the true Christian over his Bible. How he drinks in his words, and how they refresh



and comfort him. How he trusts them, and lives by them. He has got the secret of his Bible. II. IT MUST BE A SECRET OF SAFETY. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." That is just what we cannot do; we have no such tower. Life's troubles find us out of doors, and beat upon us. How insecure, defenceless, comfortless we are. A tale was once written of a man who had committed a murder, a base, treacherous, but well-concealed murder, after which he lived for many years in respect and honour, in the gratification of all tastes and wishes, in affluence, and comfort, and domestic love, till a day of late discovery and late retribution. People spoke of this as an "immoral story," because it gave the man half a life of enjoyment. But that was a short-sighted judgment. How little could such observers know of the torture that man endured from the one fact of his consciousness of insecurity; that at any moment ruin might come. Without security, which is a sense of safety, no happiness is worth the name. The secret of the Lord is a secret of safety. III. A SECRET OF STRENGTH. How strong a weak person may become who has it. And we have known strong men become weak for the lack of it. IV. A SECRET OF PEACE. The wicked are like the "troubled sea." There is such a thing as a false peace; but a man must have gone very far astray before he can know that, the peace of spiritual death. Between these two extremes, the peace of God and the peace of death, there lies a very wide and dreary morass, a state of disquiet and unrest. V. CONSIDER THE COMMUNICATION OF THIS SECRET. It is given to them who "fear Him." There are two kinds of fear: that fear which is cast out by love, and that fear which is part of love. It is a very serious thing when the foundations of religion are not laid deep in the fear of God. Remember that the fear of God, like everything else, must come instrumentally by practice. Abstain from something to-night, each one of you, some thought, some word, some act, by a great effort if necessary, on this single ground, that it will displease God. Do so again to-morrow; in a little while it will become easier to you, at last it will become habitual. (*C. J. Vaughan, D.D.*) *A palace of Divine secrets*:—I ask you to come with me through a spiritual palace, and I will describe the several apartments. I. WE TURN ASIDE INTO A WIDE AND SPACIOUS HALL. Before us is a throne, high and lifted up,—it is the throne of grace. Watch the comers as they enter; their penitential aspect, humility, solicitude; listen to their confessions and their requests. They have come with woe, care, perplexity, sin. But they all fear Him, and so are admitted to the secret of prayer. II. ANOTHER CHAMBER—THE ARMOURY OF LIGHT. Nations boast their arsenals, but there is none like this. Watch those who are coming in and being armed. III. THE TREASURE-ROOM WHICH CONTAINS THE BOOK OF LIFE. Old books are counted as treasures. Here is one of the oldest, and it is indestructible. Let Mosaic chronology be mistaken, it only makes this book a little more venerable; for it was made ere the foundations of the earth. Whose names are in it? This is one of the Lord's secrets. But all those who have been born again of the Spirit of God are written there. IV. THE CHAMBER OF CONSOLATION. Numerous visitors come crowding in. Heavily laden, worn-out, exhausted, fainting ones. They have all come to the right place. Here are staffs, cordials, medicines, anchors, lights, garments of praise. V. THE ROOM NAMED "CROSS OF LOVE." This is the highest of all. Here is revealed the secret of secrets. A soft and heavenly light fills the whole chamber. St. Paul was often in this room; it had a special charm for him. VI. THE TOWER OF THE PALACE. It is the "Tower of Vision." Winding up its alabaster stairs, well-worn but ever-renewed, we at last reach the lofty summit. Below us is the world, half hidden by the mist, its hum scarcely audible. Our eyes climb up to the regions of serene and perpetual light, to the holy splendours of the city of our God. (*W. A. Essery.*) *Hidden manna, or The mystery of saving grace*:—The saving grace that the children of God have is a secret that none in the world know besides. It is called a secret in three ways. Secret to the eye of nature; but this is not meant. Secret to the eye of enlightened nature; this is meant. It is a secret to all unsanctified professors. It is called a mystery. Grace is spiritual, and can only be received by the spiritually minded. A man must have another secret before he can know this secret. He must be a new creature. 1. Use for instruction. Is God's secret with them that fear Him? Then the godly are the friends of God. Then the godly are all one with God. 2. For refutation. Away with all who say that God gives no secret thing to any one man more than another. 3. For consolation. They are so honoured with the Lord that God hides no good thing from them that is necessary to their salvation. 4. For terror to the wicked. Here is horror to all the ungodly; they are

strangers from God, they are not admitted into God's secrets. (*W. Fermer.*) *The Lord's secret*:—1. The fear of the Lord—its origin is of God. Its effect is cleansing, purifying from the power and love of sin (Psa. xix. 9). The fear of the Lord is clean, or cleansing; its evidence is in assembling with the Lord's people (Mal. iii. 16). "Then they that feared the Lord," &c., but this fear is not the cause of the blessings spoken of, but the proof. 2. In every heart thus filled with the fear of God there is a communication of a secret. The Lord opens His mind and His heart to them, and, to begin with the lowest, there is the secret working of His grace, in conviction of sin, of righteousness, of pardon and peace—in the creation of a spirit of prayer and praise; all these being the work of grace in the soul. Then there is the secret witness of the Spirit, testifying to their adoption into His family, and the secret whispers of His love, whereby He continues to assure the soul by these tokens, that He has loved that soul with an everlasting love, and prepared it for a crown of glory. 3. The promise. Something more in prospect—He will show them His covenant. The "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure"; this was David's support in trouble and in the hour of death. He will show them, will teach them, more and more therein, the nature of it, the duration of it, its comprehensiveness, its security, its terms and conditions, its blessings and promises, all in Christ, and Christ in all. (*A. Hewlett, M.A.*) *God's greatest secret*:—The secret of the Lord is His sending His Son into the world for the redemption of lost mankind. I. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS A MYSTERY. It is not attainable without supernatural revelation. It was undiscoverable by the most exalted powers of human understanding until God, out of infinite mercy, was pleased Himself to reveal it. But even after the clearest revelation that our present state is capable of there must be owned to be, in the Christian religion, mysteries far surpassing the highest pitch of human understanding. To "know in part" is too poor and mean a degree of knowledge for our modern Christian philosophers. To them there must be nothing in Christianity mysterious. Examine their pretensions, and we shall find that they neither speak of faith as becomes Christians, nor of reason as becomes men. How far are we glad to allow the use of reason in Divine matters? 1. Reason is of great use in asserting the principles of natural religion, such as the Being of a God; the obligation to worship Him; the immortality of the soul; and the eternal and essential difference between good and evil, partly discoverable by natural light. 2. Reason is useful, since it is from rational inducements that we first admit even revelation itself. It is by reason we distinguish what is truly Divine from enthusiasm and imposture. 3. Reason is of excellent use in expounding and interpreting the mind and meaning of Holy Writ, as long as it is sober and modest and keeps strictly to the analogy of faith. 4. Reason is usefully employed in stopping the mouths of gainsayers, in enlightening their blindness or subduing their contumacy, in confuting heretics by turning their own weapons upon them, and vindicating Divine truth from all those calumnies which are unjustly brought against it. But in the sublime mysteries of our religion reason has no more to do, when it is once satisfied and convinced of the revelation, but to receive from it those truths which by its own natural powers it never had been able to have found out. II. THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUISITE IN THOSE THAT ARE TO RECEIVE THIS GREAT MYSTERY. "Them that fear Him." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of that wisdom which alone makes wise unto salvation; and that—1. By a natural efficiency. Whoever loves the precepts of God, and delights to do what He commands, will meet with little difficulty in believing what He reveals. There is a natural and easy passage from loving to believing. True saving faith requires a devout and humble submission of the mind and heart, a complacency and delight and joy in the truths that it receives. 2. Besides this natural tendency, there are through the whole Scripture many signal examples, as well as positive promises, of faith and heavenly knowledge to a due and sincere practice of what we already know. Inferences—(1) Since pride and self-conceit and a too confident relying upon our own reason have been shown to be so dangerous and destructive of our holy faith, let us strive to attain a deep and true humility of spirit, and a just sense of our own natural blindness and infirmity. Let us avoid all curious and nice inquiries into things that are too high for us. (2) Let us heartily and industriously and zealously set upon this work, the fulfilling the whole will of our Lord. Then there would soon be no remains of infidelity left in us; we should soon, then, to our unspeakable joy and satisfaction, feel, by a sincere and strict observance of the Christian duties, that we should no longer have any doubts or scruples of the Christian faith. (*R. Duke.*) *God's secrets*:—All religions have their *arcana*, or secrets known only to those who

are within. The religion of the Bible does not disdain to acknowledge its own secrets, and to drive away from its archives those who come with irreverent curiosity to pry into the contents of revelation. By "secret" we are here to understand familiar intercourse. The word here rendered "secret" is traced to a word which means couch; the idea is that of two friends seated upon the same couch, holding confidential intercourse. The talk is as between companions, and is conducted in eager whispers. God is represented thus as bringing to a loving heart His own peculiar messages and communications, which He will not publish to the general world. God has so made His universe that its various parts talk to one another. Men hold friendly and confiding intercourse. The sun is full of lessons, so are the flowers, so are all the winds that blow, so are the forests, and so are the oceans. All these may be said to be open secrets; that is to say, men may discover their meanings for themselves—by comparison, by the study of analogy, by the watching of the coming and going phenomena of nature. But beyond this open revelation there is a secret covenant. God calls His children into inner places, and there, in hushed and holy silence, He communicates His thought as His children are able to receive it. "He will show them His covenant"; He will read to them His own decrees; He will be His own interpreter, and make plain to the heart things that are mysterious to the intellect. We are to remember that in holding these secrets we do not hold them originally, or as if by right: we hold them simply as stewards or trustees, and we are not to make them common property. The heart should always know something that the tongue has never told. Deep in our souls there should be a peace created by communion with God which no outward riches can disturb. "The secret of the Lord" may not mean any curious knowledge of mere details, or of future events, or the action and interaction of history; but it may mean, and does mean, a complete and immutable confidence that God reigns over His whole creation, and is doing everything upon a basis and under a principle which must eventuate in final and imperturbable peace. The universe is not governed in any haphazard way. This word "covenant" has been, no doubt, abused, perverted, or misapplied; but its use indicates that the Divine plan is sovereign, settled, unchangeable. The universe is the Word of God, and it cannot fail of its purpose. Revelation is the heart of the Most High, and every jot and tittle of it will be fulfilled. The truly religious life is not a matter of mere intellectual intelligence, or information, or power of argument; it is a profound persuasion of the heart, a real, simple, solid trust in the righteousness and goodness of God. How such a trust lifts us above the fret and the anxiety of ever-changing details! This passage is in perfect harmony with many assurances given by Jesus Christ Himself. He promised the Holy Spirit to abide with the Church, to show the Church things to come, and to take of the things of Christ and show them unto the Church. The secret of the Lord is thus an ever-enlarging mystery—an ever-enlarging benefaction. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *Revelations to those who obey:*—There are commentators who refer this verse, not to the external orderings of God's providence, but to the mental assurance which God gives those that fear Him, of the truth of His Word, and the adequacy of the religion it reveals, to satisfy the wants of the soul. This mental assurance, wrought into the soul by God Himself, is thought by some to be the secret of the Lord here intended. The Saviour is believed to refer to this secret assurance in the words, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John vii. 17). The Jews had denied the Divine reality of His miracles, and also that the Messianic prophecies had been verified in Him. "Very well," answers our Lord, "I propose to you another means of testing My claim to be your Messiah and Saviour. Practise the precepts of the religion I teach you, and you shall soon have revealed to you the secret whether it be of God. Do His will, and you shall know of the doctrine. In obeying the precept, all else shall become plain." I knew a man who acted upon this saying of the Saviour. He admired, as perfect, the preceptive portions of the Bible, but stumbled at some of its peculiar doctrines. He determined, therefore, to ascertain what effect obeying the precepts would have toward dissipating his difficulties in regard to the doctrines of our religion. He therefore at once endeavoured to live in every respect as he would have lived had he been a Christian: reading, praying, attending public worship, and making the moral code of the Bible his only rule of action. So obeying the precept, in less than a twelve-month's time the secret of the Lord was revealed to him, the truth of all the doctrines of God's covenant of redeeming mercy in Christ was made plain to his understanding and grateful to his heart. Here is a cure for scepticism within the reach



of every man. (*David Caldwell, M.A.*) *Knowledge the reward of obedience*.—1. There are some parts of the Bible which none but a learned man can understand or explain. There are seeming difficulties and discrepancies in the Bible which may escape the notice of the casual reader, but of which all well-instructed theologians are aware, since they are standing objections in the mouth of the sceptic or the scorner. 2. There are some parts of the Bible which all can understand. No one who reads the New Testament, or who hears it read, can doubt what he ought to do, and what he ought not to do. The Bible is clear about many of its doctrines. 3. There is a middle class of truths that are easy of comprehension to some, and hard to others,—truths which human learning cannot impart, nor the want of learning, as such, exclude from the mind. These are the most solemn and most important teachings of Scripture, which tell us of the intimate relations which exist between man and his God: such as, the doctrines of the corruption of our nature; of the degrading and shameful conduct of sin; of our need of salvation and purification; of our own inability to purify and save ourselves; of the priceless blessings involved in the atonement of Jesus, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Of all these doctrines it may justly be said, they are easy or hard to be understood by different persons, and sometimes even by the same persons at different times. The practical knowledge of these great truths is an effort beyond the power of the intellect, apart from the convictions and aspirations of the soul. The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are spiritually discerned, and mere learning cannot spiritually discern. “If any man will do God’s will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” An obedience springing from true faith is the key by which we are to unlock the hidden and more precious mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. (*G. W. Brameld.*) *The knowledge of covenant securities*.—The Rev. F. B. Meyer, when speaking of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises, used the striking illustration of the deed to a house. The deed may be very old. It may be hard to decipher. The parchment may be stained and cracked. The inmates of the home in their busy life may forget all about it. But the very existence of the home depends upon it, and if it were lost and could not be replaced, sorrow and poverty and wretchedness would be the portion of that household. So our peace of soul, our very spiritual life, depends on the covenant which God the Father made long ago on our behalf with Christ the Son, that for His sake our sins should be forgiven and we should have a right to the many mansions.

Vers. 16–18. **Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.**—*A sufferer’s prayer*.—How tender is this language, and how instructive too. David was a sufferer as well as a king. But he is a petitioner also. He prays for—I. DELIVERANCE. II. A KIND LOOK FROM GOD IS DESIRABLE AT ANY TIME, BUT IN AFFLICTION AND PAIN it is like life from the dead. Therefore he says, “Look upon mine affliction and pain.” III. PARDON. “Forgive all my sins.” This was his meaning; let it be ours. (*W. Jay.*) *The cry of the afflicted*.—Look at Loch Lomond. A hundred feet of water, deep and dark and deadly; the waves that slumber yonder at the foot of the Ben will drown you. Yes, but when God sent out His frost, when from the caves of the north there crept the congealing influence, lo! the waves slumbered and slept, and you walked and skimmed on your ringing steels across the congealed billows. The same lake, but so transformed that you could skim across its surface. Some of you know what it is to be almost overwhelmed with the billows of trouble. They roll over you again and again, and recede but to come on with redoubled power, until at last you cry out, “Lord, save me, or I perish.” Then there comes a great calm, and you just skim across the billows of your daily toil, because Christ your Saviour has told the troubles and difficulties and monotony to sleep. Oh, what a glorious thing the grace of Christ is! (*John Robertson.*) *David’s prayer*.—I wonder if they are able to say of us in the time of sorrow and bereavement and trouble, “Behold, he prayeth.” Those travellers, as they pass, are suddenly arrested by a sound that is strange to them, and they ask what it is. It is David at his prayers. Ah, he is all right! Pray on, David; do not be ashamed of your voice—let it sound out. It is nobler thus to pray, than with loud, uplifted voice to give the command to thine armies to fall in to the front: and David’s voice had done that for many a day. A ringing, clarion peal the warrior had given in his time: “Fall in to the front!” They loved to hear it in Israel. When the king spake, it reminded them of the old days when the right arm of the young warrior did valiant things for

Jehovah; and they liked to hear his voice rise above the din of battle: but it is nobler, kinglier, and far more grand to hear the old king with his quavering voice lifted up in prayer. *A godly man's appeal*:—I. ON BEHALF OF SELF. 1. For deliverance from suffering (ver. 16). "The road to heaven," says an old writer, "is soaked with the tears and blood of the saints." 2. For forgiveness (ver. 18). He traced his sufferings to his sins. Sin is the gall in the cup of life; the root of the pestiferous tree of all natural evil. From suffering we infer sin. He believed that his sins had to do with God. Wrong in any form or department of life is sin against Him. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." He knew that God's forgiveness was necessary to his deliverance. 3. For preservation of life, of confidence, of character (ver. 21). II. ON BEHALF OF SOCIETY (ver. 22). There is nothing selfish in genuine piety. The man who prays and struggles only for his own salvation is utterly destitute of genuine religion. His creed may be correct, and all his religious observances, but he has not the root of the matter in him. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. **Look upon mine affliction and my pain.**—*A troubled prayer*:—I. IT IS WELL FOR US WHEN OUR PRAYERS ABOUT OUR SORROWS ARE LINKED WITH PRAYERS ABOUT OUR SINS. Our sorrows profit us when they bring our sins to mind. 1. They give us time for thought. A sick-bed has often been a place of repentance. 2. Our sorrows are often the direct result of our sins. Then we cannot but remember them. Not to have sorrow when we sin is a mark of the reprobate. 3. When our sorrows are so like our sins. Jacob was a crafty deceiver, and he in his turn was, once and again, craftily deceived. He was a great bargain-maker, and he in his turn was once and again craftily deceived. He cheated his father, and so everybody cheated him, of course. How often we have to eat the fruit of our own ways! 4. They drive us out of an atmosphere of worldliness. There is our nest, and a very pretty, snug nest it is; and we have been very busy picking up all the softest feathers that we could find, and all the prettiest bits of moss that earth could yield, and we have been engaged night and day making that nest soft and warm. There we intended to remain. We meant for ourselves a long indulgence, sheltered from inclement winds, never to put our feet among the cold dewdrops, nor to weary our pinions by mounting up into the clouds. But suddenly a thorn pierced our breast; we tried to remove it, but the more we struggled the more deeply it fixed itself into us. Then we began to spread our wings, and as we mounted we began to sing the song which, in the nest, we never should have sung, the song of those who have communion with the skies. 5. Sometimes they remind us of our ingratitude. How sad a blenish upon the character of Hezekiah it was that he rendered not again unto the Lord according to the benefits done unto him. 6. Sometimes sorrows remind us of want of sympathy with those who have like sorrows. 7. Sorrow is also sent to admonish us of our neglect of Divine teaching. Why that rod? Why that whip and bridle? Because I have been like the horse and the mule which had no understanding. Let us humble ourselves before God, and ask with Job, "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me." II. IT IS WELL WHEN WE ARE AS EARNEST ABOUT OUR SINS AS WE ARE ABOUT OUR SORROWS. The chaplain of Newgate says many of the prisoners will pretend very great repentance when he is talking to them about spiritual things, but he can always tell whether their repentance is genuine or not, by their trying to bring him round to tell them something about their punishment. Before their trial they frequently ask to know what term of imprisonment they are likely to get. Then, when they are undergoing punishment, they frequently try to get some trifling favour through his means. They think much more of the punishment than they do of the crime. If I go to God and only ask to have my sorrows taken off me, what is that? I am no true penitent. It is the pain and not the sin that troubles me. III. IT IS WELL TO TAKE BOTH SORROW AND SIN TO THE SAME PLACE. David took both to God. 1. Take our sorrows to Him, not to any neighbour or friend. 2. But let us take our sins also. 3. The most mournful and the most sinful are welcome to the Lord Jesus. 4. He can with equal ease remove both. IV. GO TO HIM IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT. David says, "Look upon," that is all. But when he speaks of his sins he is much more definite as to what he would have done with them, "Forgive all my sins." I must have them forgiven, I cannot bear them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Comfort under affliction*:—We know not the nature of the sufferings under which David laboured, whether of body or of mind, or both; but this we know, that in all of them his first refuge and his principal relief was prayer. Suffering times are times both of searching and discovery. It is a fire that tries a man's

work, a man's temper, and a man's state whether he be really a child of God. If he be not, when suffering comes, his angry almost blasphemous speeches will reveal that. But the good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, will bring forth good things. God being pleased with him, he is pleased with every thing. Hence in affliction, knowing that it is laid on in love, and that he deserves much more, he prays, "Look upon mine affliction," &c. Two things are taught us here—I. THAT A KIND LOOK FROM GOD IS VERY DESIRABLE IN AFFLICTION; for it is—1. A look of special observation. As to the kind, the degree, and the duration of our affliction. 2. Of tender compassion. 3. Of support and assistance (Exod. iii. 7; 2 Chron. xvi. 9). Now here we generally stop; if the Lord will but grant us this, it is all we ask, we will not trouble Him for more. We forget our sin. II. THAT THE SWEETEST CORDIAL UNDER AFFLICTION IS THE ASSURANCE OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS (Psa. xxxii. 1; Rom. iv. 7). 1. Because trouble is very apt to bring our sins to remembrance (Jer. xxii. 21; Gen. xlii. 21; 1 Kings xvii. 18; Psa. xl. 12). 2. Because a sense of pardon will largely remove all distressing fears of death and judgment. When we feel our flesh wasting and this earthly house of our tabernacle ready to tumble about us, we cannot help inquiring, with a trembling anxiety, "When I am turned out of this house where shall I live next?" And if we have no evidence and no hope of an interest in the Saviour, how terrible the prospect. But if we are forgiven, how all is changed. So then, let us—1. Praise God that He should condescend so graciously as to look favourably upon us. 2. From former mercies of the Lord, if the Lord is looking upon us, let us hope for future ones. 3. If a kind look from God be so comfortable, what must heaven be? (*Samuel Lavington.*)

Ver. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee.—*Resolutions made and strength invoked for a year of duty:*—What should our memories do for us? If we are really humbled and grateful for the past, what should we resolve on now? We should strive to "grow in grace," that "love may abound more and more." How may we realise this desire, for we have many enemies? 1. The first disposition essentially requisite to our success is said to be "integrity and uprightness." The petition implies that he would be sincere and upright towards God. If we are to be sincere we must correct our own faults. We must cherish those dispositions which God approves. We must try to fulfil our duty better. And we must do all the good we can. We have instances in Scripture of resolutions that were very fruitless. Israel said at Sinai, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." And yet in less than six weeks they were dancing before the Golden Calf. Surely the wreck of many a fair hope in past years may tell us it is not wise to depend on ourselves. The Psalmist says, "For I wait on Thee"—"I look to Thee to sustain that integrity, I look to Thee to bless it, without Thee I can neither continue upright nor secure a blessing from uprightness." The grace of God alone can enable us to profit by any external advantages. It is God who must help us to conquer even the least fault. It is God alone can help us to walk with any measure of steadfastness in the path of obedience. (*Baptist W. Noel, M.A.*) *Justice, honesty, truth, and sincerity:*—Integrity and uprightness are terms of like import, and signify a virtue that is essential to all true religion and morality. I. THE NATURE OF INTEGRITY OR UPRIGHTNESS IN OUR DEALINGS WITH MEN. 1. With respect to our actions; and so it may be taken for justice and honesty, in opposition to injuring and cheating. It is very dishonest to borrow money or goods, or to trade upon credit, without upright designs and fair prospects of paying every one his own. 2. With respect to our words. This may be taken as truth, in opposition to lying. But to understand a lie there are moral distinctions that must be attended to. The wrong of falsehood consists in knowing or thinking one thing and saying another with an intent to deceive. There are lies which men call ludicrous, but they had better be avoided. Others, called officious, which are told to hide a fault, or to prevent some mischief. The worst of all is the injurious lie. II. RECOMMEND THIS INTEGRITY. 1. In its native beauty. 2. For the reality and honour of religion. All religion is mockery, and vain pretence without it. 3. The safety and happiness of all society depend upon it. There is no living with a man of a false heart and tongue. 4. Integrity is of high advantage to ourselves. It prevents abundance of guilt, and many a throbbing wound in the conscience which a contrary temper and behaviour would subject us to. It screens us from the reproach and vengeance of wicked men. This should excite a religious care, upon Christian principles, to exceed the brightest of the heathen in our moral conduct. Let us see that our hearts be made upright by the renewing of our minds. (*J. Guise, D.D.*) *Integrity:*—Truthfulness,



integrity, and goodness—qualities that hang not on any man's breath—form the essence of manly character, or, as one of our old writers has it, "that inbred loyalty unto virtue which can serve her without a livery." He who possesses these qualities, united with strength of purpose, carries with him a power which is irresistible. He is strong to do good, strong to resist evil, and strong to bear up under difficulty and misfortune. When Stephen of Colonna fell into the hands of his base assailants, and they asked him in derision, "Where is now your fortress?" "Here," was his bold reply, placing his hand upon his heart. It is in misfortune that the character of the upright man shines forth with the greatest lustre; and when all else fails, he takes his stand upon his integrity and his courage. (*Christian Weekly.*)

## PSALM XXVI.

**VERS. 1-12. Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity.**—*Leading proofs of personal piety*:—I. A STRONG CRAVING FOR A KNOWLEDGE OF THE REAL STATE OF THE CHARACTER. "Judge me, O Lord." Implying—1. A belief in the possibility of being self-deceived. 2. A desire to be made right, at whatever cost. II. A PRACTICAL RECOGNITION OF GOD'S MERCY. "For Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes." The life of the godly is marked by—1. The strongest gratitude. 2. The highest courage. III. A PROFOUND CONSCIOUSNESS OF SINCERITY OF CONDUCT. "I have walked in Thy truth." The godly man hates hypocrisy and loathes shame. IV. A STRONG REPUGNANCE TO ALL UNGODLY SOCIETY. "I have not sat with vain persons," &c. 1. He declares that he never had any fellowship with them (ver. 4). 2. He expresses his hatred of them (ver. 5). 3. He prays that he may not be gathered to their company (ver. 9). Good men shun the society of the wicked, because (1) it is wrong; (2) because it is pernicious. V. A DELIGHT IN THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD. "I will wash mine hands in innocency," &c. True worship—1. Requires personal preparation. 2. Consists in public acknowledgments. 3. Is inspired with the presence of God. VI. A FIXED DETERMINATION TO WALK EVER WITH THE HOLY. "But as for me, I will walk," &c. (vers. 11, 12). (*Homilist.*) *The character of an upright man sketched by himself*:—To do this requires much introspection. Yet there may be circumstances when such work becomes necessary. I. THE PSALMIST HAD A GOOD FOUNDATION ON WHICH HIS LIFE WAS BUILT. 1. Trust in Jehovah (ver. 1). 2. God's loving-kindness (ver. 5). 3. God's truth; that is, His faithfulness (ver. 3). Note: all the supports of his integrity were outside himself. Happy the man that can stay his mind on Divine faithfulness and love! If these props cease to sustain, moral and spiritual worth pine from want of motive and hope. II. THE LIFE BUILT ON THIS FOUNDATION IS WORTHY OF IMITATION. It was a life of—1. Integrity (ver. 11). 2. Straightforward progress (ver. 1). 3. Avoiding evil associations (vers. 4, 5). 4. Cultivation of holy worship, song, and thanksgiving (vers. 6-8, 12). Note—(1) Those who have God as the support of their life will show a life worthy of such support. (2) Those who most value communion with God will most freely appreciate and cultivate the stimulus and comfort to be obtained from united worship. (*C. Clemence, D.D.*) *An appeal marked by specific entreaty*:—Four lines of supplication. I. THAT GOD WOULD VINDICATE HIM AND NOT LET HIM BE MIXED UP WITH THOSE HE HATES (vers. 1, 9, 10). II. THAT GOD WOULD SEARCH AND PROVE HIM (ver. 2). III. THAT GOD WOULD PURIFY HIM (ver. 3). Upright before men, he does not pretend to be perfect before God. IV. THAT GOD WOULD ENTIRELY DELIVER HIM FROM THE SURROUNDINGS OF UNGENIAL AND UNHOLY MEN (vers. 9, 10). (*Ibid.*) *David's appeal and its issue*:—I. AN APPEAL TO GOD TO BE HIS JUDGE. II. THE CAUSES THAT INDUCED HIM TO IT. 1. His faith and confidence in God. 2. His integrity. (1) How he carried himself to men: abstaining from all association with wicked doers. (2) How to God: showing marks of his piety. III. THE PETITION. That God would not suffer him to be polluted with the conversation of wicked men, nor involved in their punishment. IV. HIS GRATITUDE. He will praise the Lord in the congregations. (*Bp. Wm. Nicholson.*) *David's integrity*:—It would be madness in any man, however blameless his life may have been, to call upon God to enter into judgment with him for his offences against Him. It is, however, often otherwise in regard to many of our fellow-men. We can safely invite the omniscient Judge to decide between us and them. We can

say in regard to them, as David does, "Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity." Though Saul sought David's life, and once with his own hand hurled a javelin at him to slay him, David never for a moment swerved from the conduct of a dutiful subject. He still fought Saul's battles for him, and though Saul was pursuing him as an outlaw, spared him when it was in his power to kill him. He never raised his hand against the king, nor allowed those under his control to do so. Integrity had marked his whole conduct, so that Saul himself was obliged to acknowledge with tears, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." So should it be with the Christian always. He should never allow the injustice of others to mar his integrity. Principle, not passion, should be the pole star of his course. (*D. Caldwell, M.A.*)

Ver. 2. **Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.**—*Our need of Divine scrutiny*:—I. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WE MAY TRY OURSELVES BY FALSE PRINCIPLES. Self-examination is an all-important duty, but when we have searched most diligently we need that God should examine us. Now, we are prone to err in regard to our repentance, our faith, and our obedience—these which are the grand requisites for salvation. II. WE ARE PRONE TO BE PARTIAL TO OURSELVES,—to make allowances where we should not. III. AND OUR MOTIVES IN OUR CONDUCT ARE SO DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN BY ANY BUT GOD. IV. AND WHEN WE DISCOVER IMPERFECTIONS WE CANNOT CORRECT THEM, even by that Divine grace which He is willing to bestow. V. THE DIVINE JUDGMENT will determine the decisions of the last day. What we think, or our fellow-men believe, will not avail then. VI. WHAT IS NEEDED TO PREPARE FOR HEAVEN. (*S. Morell.*) *Examinations* (A talk with children):—As a rule, children are not very anxious for examinations. They do not see what possible good can come out of them. If most of them had their wishes, they never would have one at all. Yet in days to come these children will see that of all things that they did in their school days perhaps the most important were these very examinations. Now, David here asked God to examine him; he asked a very keen examiner to take the task in hand. He knew what that meant: he knew that no weakness, no ignorance, no sin would remain hidden; but that everything would be known, not only to God, but also largely to David himself. And that was one of the reasons why he wanted to be examined. I. NOW, OBSERVE THAT THE WORD "EXAMINE" HERE IS A VERY FORCIBLE WORD. It means "to examine by fire," and, therefore, by that which shall burn up all the dross, and only leave behind that which can pass through fire. Again, the word "try" is further expressive. The Hebrew word means "melting by fire"; in other words, it means "examine by fire to the point of melting." Thus the examination the Psalmist asked for was an examination by fire—an examination that should burn away everything that was impure. II. THE RESULT OF AN EXAMINATION TO A LARGE EXTENT IS TO MAKE ONE KNOW ONESELF. If it were not for the examinations which children get, some of them would get very conceited, and would think that they knew everything. When any one begins a study he is convinced in a week or so that he knows all about it. If you see him again in a twelvemonth he begins to doubt it; but if you see him in two years he is quite convinced he knows very little. Now, examinations are very helpful in that way. The condition of learning is just to learn, first of all, that we know next to nothing, and thus to be dissatisfied with ourselves. Then, and then only, we shall make an effort. III. FAILURE IN EXAMINATION HAS VERY OFTEN LED TO DETERMINATION on the part of a boy or girl never to fail again; thus failure has been one of the greatest blessings they have had in life. David felt sure that if God examined him he would know very much more of his own poor miserable self than he did before, and some path of sin which had escaped his notice would be revealed to him. Indeed, he was anxious that the Lord should not conceal from him anything that was evil in him. To be conscious of one's error is the first step necessary to avoid repeating it. IV. Again, there was another feeling on the part of David, namely, that thorough as God was as an examiner, and thorough as the exposure would be by such an examination, GOD WAS NEVERTHELESS VERY KIND; for David says in the following verse, "For Thy loving-kindnesses are before mine eyes." Our best loved teachers have been those who, though they saw all our failings, all our mistakes, very clearly, yet did not hold us up to ridicule, but sympathised with our difficulties and put the best construction on all our actions. So it is with our Lord. He knows our hearts, and reads every thought before we express it in words. Hidden desires are all known to Him. But then, He is so kind, so loving, so

forgiving, we can leave ourselves in His hands. (*D. Davies.*) *Self-examination examined*.—Self-examination is to many disciples a kind of first point in practical religion. It is heard and read on all sides. But there are only two Scripture passages which can be at all cited for it, one of which (2 Cor. xiii. 5) certainly has no such meaning; and the other (1 Cor. xi. 28) carries no sufficient authority for the practice. Scripture sends us to God: "Examine me, O Lord"; "Search me, O God"; "The Lord trieth the heart." I. GOD CERTAINLY CAN EXAMINE US, and we cannot in any but the most superficial and incomplete sense examine ourselves. For—1. Our memory is too short and scant to recall or restore the conception of one in a hundred million of the acts that make up our lives. 2. Even if we could recall them, every one, we could never go over the survey of such vast materials, so as to form any judgment of them or of ourselves. 3. And since the understanding of our present state is impossible without understanding all the causes in our action that have fashioned the character and shaped its figure, our faculty is even shorter here than before. Omniscience only is equal to the task. II. IN WHAT IS FREQUENTLY UNDERSTOOD BY SELF-EXAMINATION THERE IS SOMETHING MISTAKEN OR DECEITFUL which needs to be carefully resisted. 1. It is a kind of artificial state, in which the soul is drawn off from its objects and works, and its calls of love and sacrifice, to engage itself in acts of self-inspection. 2. He may even be so engrossed in self-examination as to become morbidly selfish in it; for nothing is more selfish than to be always boring into one's self. III. HOW MUCH IS IMPLIED IN A HEARTY WILLINGNESS OR DESIRE TO HAVE GOD EXAMINE US AND PROVE US. A mind seeking after truth, ready to receive it; more, a soul already found to be in God's friendship, sealed with the witness of His acceptance. IV. THERE IS A WAY OF COMING AT THE VERDICT OF GOD, WHATEVER IT MAY BE. God designs always to give us the benefit of His own knowledge of our state. He never intended us for, and never puts us to, the task of testing ourselves. He expects to do this for us. We are complete only in Him. He is, and is ever to be, our Light, and we only know ourselves in Him. God is manifested in the consciousness of them that love Him and are right towards Him. They will know God by an immediate knowledge or revelation. They will have His Spirit witnessing with theirs. God has planned our life so as to bring us into a perception of the many defects and errors lurking in us, and to set us in the same judgment of them that He has Himself, proving us at every turn, trying even the reins and heart, that our most secret things may be revealed. If there should be any legitimate place for self-examination it is in the field where we go to discover our faults and the sins that require to be forsaken or put away. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) *Morbid self-inspection kills love*.—Many years ago I knew an excellent, much-esteemed Christian mother, who had become morbidly introverted, and could not find her love to God. Seeing at once that she was stifling it by her own self-inspecting engrossment, which would not allow her to so much as think of God's loveliness, I said to her, "But you love your son, you have no doubt of that." "Of course I love him, why should I not?" To show her, then, how she was killing her love to God, I said, "But take one week now for the trial, and make thorough examination of your love to your son, and it will be strange if, at the end of the week, you do not tell me that you have serious doubt of it." I returned at the time, to be dreadfully shocked by my too cruel experiment. "No," she said, "I do not love him; I abhor him." She was fallen off the edge, and her self-examination was become her insanity! (*Ibid.*) *God trying the reins and the heart*.—It is wonderful to see with what skill God has adjusted all our experiences, in this mortal life, so as to make us sensible of our errors and defects. As the invisible ink is brought out in a distinct colour by holding what is written to the fire, so God brings out all our faults and our sins by the scorches of experience through which we are ever passing in the fiery trials of life. If we are proud, He has a way to make us see it, and to break down our pride. If we cherish any subtle grudge or animosity, He will somehow call it out and make us see it. If we are selfish, or covetous, or jealous, or frivolous, or captious, or self-indulgent, or sensual, or self-confident, or fanatical, or self-righteous, or partial, or obstinate, or prejudiced, or uncharitable, or censorious,—whatever fault we have in us, whether it be in the mind, or the head, or the body, or I might almost say the bones, no matter how subtle, or how ingeniously covered it may be, He has us in the furnace of trial and correction, where He is turning us round and round, lifting us in prosperity, crushing us in adversity, subduing us with affliction, tempting out our faults and then chastising them, humbling us, correcting us, softening, tempering, soothing, fortifying, refining, healing, and so



managing us, as to detect all our drossy and bad qualities, and separate them from us. He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, and allows nothing to escape either His discovery or our correction. No self-examination we could make would discover, at all, what He is continually bringing to the light, and exposing to our detection. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. **For Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in Thy truth.**—*The loving-kindness of the Lord contemplated*:—I. We have A PLEASANT OBJECT OF CONTEMPLATION—the loving-kindness of the Lord. God has ever been manifesting this. In creation, especially in the creation of man. Other principles came afterwards into operation. God must be just as well as beneficent. Hence man, when he sinned, had to feel the effects of God's sore displeasure. But it is only when this is viewed in its connection with a dispensation of mercy, and as designed to lead us to repentance, that it can be regarded as manifesting His loving-kindness. It is not merely forbearance—the patience which endures for a season the vessels of wrath, and which must at last give way to the growing vengeance provoked by their iniquities. It is the pitying tenderness with which our miseries and dangers are regarded, the redeeming love which would rescue us from them all, and receive and cherish us again as dear children, and delight in us at all times to do us good. Therefore consider—1. What has been done to render the exercise of mercy consistent with justice. See this in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is it that arrests the attention and draws to itself the rapt admiration of the disciple whom Jesus loved? “Herein,” he exclaims, “is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Did he overlook the other doings of God, in which He has shown His goodness to the children of men? No; but he felt that this transcends them all. In this he saw most clearly that God is love. 2. Think on the fruits of this loving-kindness. Our mercies temporal and spiritual stretch on through all eternity. Notice also its spontaneous character, and its constancy. II. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE BEFORE OUR EYES. 1. As the frequent subject of our thought. 2. As the sure ground of our hope. 4. As the motive of our praise. (*James Henderson, D.D.*) *Think well and do well*:—David is labouring under the fear that he should be judged and condemned with the ungodly. He therefore urges reasons wherefore this should not be so. And this amongst the rest, that his thoughts were upon the loving-kindness of God. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” We may form a better judgment of ourselves, probably, from the tenor of our thoughts than from any other evidence. If our thoughts all go downward, downward we ourselves are going. But if there be some breathings towards the heavenly, then may we have hope that we also are ascending towards the heavenly places and shall dwell in them hereafter. David could urge, besides the secret evidence of his devout thoughts, the public proof of his holy acts—“I have walked in Thy truth.” The two must go together to become valid evidence. I. THE MIND OCCUPIED WITH A FRUITFUL SUBJECT. “Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes.” It is exceedingly profitable for the Christian to have always some subject of thought upon his mind. When the mind does not receive holy matters to feed upon, as a rule it preys upon itself; like certain of our bodily organs which, if not supplied with nutritive matter, will soon begin to devour their own tissues. The mind when it eats into itself forms doubts, suspicions, complaints; and nine out of ten of the doubts and fears of God's people come from two things—walking at a distance from God, and want of spiritual nutriment for the soul. A powerful stream of holy contemplation will scour the thoughts and bear away the foul deposits of unholy thought. Now, David's theme here is a rightful subject for meditation. It is our bounden duty to think much upon God's loving-kindness. And it is a good subject, and wide, and pleasing. Very plain too, and suitable and seasonable for us all. II. A LIFE ORDERED BY A RIGHT RULE. “I have walked in Thy truth.” He means, “I have tried to order my religion according to the truth God has revealed.” Can we all say that? Do not most of us worship God in the way, and because it is the way, our forefathers did? We are of one mind with the old Saxon king who, when he was about to be baptized, stood with one leg in the water and inquired of the bishop, “Where do you say my ancestors are gone? They knew nothing about your Christianity.” “All cast into hell,” said the bishop. “Well, then,” said this fine old Conservative, “I will go with them; I should not like to be parted from my kith and kin.” Very much of this principle rules our country still. David means, next, that he had walked according to God's law. “I have walked in Thy truth.”

But—III. See THE LINK WHICH BINDS THE TWO PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER. The one has been the consequence of the other. Because I thought much of Thy love, therefore I walked in Thy truth. Our thoughts greatly influence our actions. You cannot send the mind up the chimney and expect it to come down white. Whatever road the thoughts traverse, all the faculties of manhood will go after them. But there are some men who separate these things. There are some men who think, or say they think, of God's loving-kindness, but do not walk in God's truth. What do we say of men who make the doctrines of grace an excuse for licentiousness? Paul said, "Their damnation is just." Others there are who say they walk in God's truth, but His loving-kindness is never before their eyes. They boast of their character, but they never think of God's grace. They are Pharisees; they know not what spirit they are of. Let us remember that when we get dull in the practical part of religion, the best way of revival is to think more of the loving-kindness of God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *An encouraging contemplation*:—I. AS A SUBJECT OF CONTEMPLATION. David said, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." II. AS THE SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT. How often we need this—under a sense of guilt; in our afflictions. III. AS AN INCITEMENT TO PRAISE. "How lamentable," says Leighton, "is it that a world so full of God's mercy should be so empty of His glory!" IV. AS AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR IMITATION. There have been those who have sought to resemble Him. (*W. Jay.*) *The manifestness of Divine benignity*:—"God is beauty and love," says Plato; and these words are echoed by all whose spiritual vision is not dimmed by sensual feeling and sceptical thought. What is meant by Divine goodness or benignity? Not good-doing, but good-being—goodness of nature. I. GOD'S BENIGNITY IS A FACT EVER BEFORE THE EYES OF MAN'S INVESTIGATING INTELLECT. Man's logical pathway to this great idea is by three grand stages. 1. The master-disposition of a moral being is ever the essence of his moral character. The varied impulses of the soul have been resolved into two grand dispositions—the good-seeking and the self-seeking. With a change of the presiding disposition there comes a thorough revolution of character. 2. The master-disposition of an absolutely competent being is always expressed in the general tendency of his works. God is such a being; He has all wisdom, all power; and we are authorised to look upon the universe as the expression of His heart. 3. The general tendency of the universe is to produce happiness. And this general impression is confirmed by all scientific research, which demonstrates that the organisation of all sentient beings is contrived for happiness; and that the external sphere of every such being contains full provision for its happiness. But how comes it, then, that there is so much suffering in the world? (1) Sufferings form a small item compared with enjoyments. (2) It subserves benevolent ends. II. IT IS A FACT EVER BEFORE THE EYE OF MAN'S GENERAL CONSCIOUSNESS. And universal man believes in it with a faith underlying all the phenomena of life. There is—1. A universally felt responsibility for moral evil. 2. A universally felt appreciation of benignity as the essence of excellence. 3. A universally felt obligation to worship. 4. A universally felt desire for continued existence. III. IT IS A FACT EVER BEFORE THE EYE OF MAN'S BIBLICAL FAITH. The Scriptures reveal the goodness of God as—1. Conferring blessings of a transcendent character. 2. Conferring these blessings on those who justly deserved His displeasure. 3. Conferring them by means of the most stupendous sacrifice. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." That God should have bestowed any favour upon sinful creatures and enemies is a wonderful display of goodness; but that He should have made such a sacrifice "passeth knowledge." More, He makes us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. His goodness is His glory. Faith in His goodness—(1) Is essential to spiritual union; (2) is the necessary condition of spiritual culture; (3) is the solving principle of all intellectual difficulties touching His government; (4) is the under-foundation of all our hope. (*Homilist.*) *The loving-kindness and truth of God*:—I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY THIS. 1. It may be taken for either an essential perfection in God, or some external dispensation of good from God. In the former sense, Psa. li. 1; in the latter, Psa. xlii. 8. In both senses here. 2. It displays and exerts itself in many acts of providence, but especially in Christ, and the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings by Him (Joel ii. 13; Tit. iii. 4). 3. It may be considered as respecting others or ourselves (Eph. v. 25; Gal. ii. 20). II. WHAT IT IS FOR GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS TO BE BEFORE OUR EYES. 1. Duly to apprehend it. 2. To believe it, and be persuaded of it (John viii. 56; Heb. xi. 13). 3. To esteem and prize it (Psa. xxxvi. 7). 4. To consider it, and be seriously reminded of it (Exod. xx. 20; Song i. 4). III. WHAT IS MEANT BY

**GOD'S TRUTH.** 1. His immutable faithfulness (Psa. lxxxix. 49, xciv. 4). 2. His Word (Psa. cxix. 142). 3. The sincerity of those that belong to Him (Psa. li. 6). **IV. WHAT IT IS TO WALK IN HIS TRUTH.** 1. To place our firm reliance on the faithfulness of God. 2. To attend strictly to the Word of God, both its doctrinal and practical parts. 3. To be upright in our way, in opposition to that walking in craftiness which is the celebrated policy of the children of this world. 4. Perseverance in this course. (*T. Cruso.*)

**Vers. 4, 5. I have not sat with vain persons.**—*Separate, yet near*:—The eyes which have God's loving-kindness ever before them are endowed with penetrative clearness of vision into the true hollowness of most of the objects pursued by men, and with a terrible sagacity which detects hypocrisy and shame. Association with such men is necessary, and heaven must be in contact with dough in order to do its transforming work; but it is impossible for a man whose heart is truly in touch with God not to feel ill at ease when brought into contact with those who have no share in his deepest convictions and emotions. . . . No doubt separateness from evil-doers is but part of a godly man's duty, and has often been exaggerated into selfish withdrawal from a world which needs good men's presence all the more the worse it is; but it is a part of his duty: "Come out from among them and be separate" is not yet an abrogated command. No man will ever mingle with "men of vanity" so as to draw them from the shadows of earth to the substance in God, unless his loving association with them rests on profound revulsion from their principles of action. None comes so near to sinful men as the sinless Christ; and if He had not been ever "separate from sinners" He would never have been near enough to redeem them. We may safely imitate His free companionship, which earned Him the glorious name of their Friend, if we imitate His remoteness from their evil. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*) **I have hated the congregation of evil-doers.**—*With wicked men, but not of them*:—Although, when driven into exile, every one that was in distress, in debt, &c., gathered themselves unto David, and he became a captain over them,—he never led them against his king and country, but only against their enemies; and in time changed the most reckless and turbulent of men into the best of soldiers and citizens. There is no place where the sincere Christian cannot make his influence felt for good: in the army, in the navy, in trade, at the bar, on the bench, in the halls of legislation, and everywhere; not by sacrificing, but by maintaining and exhibiting his principles in his spirit and conduct. (*D. Caldwell, M.A.*)

**Vers. 6, 7. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord.**—*Purity of heart and life*:—**I.** WHAT THIS RESOLUTION IMPLIES. 1. An apprehension of the holiness of God. 2. The condition—holiness—in which alone he could have communion with God. 3. Great desire for it. 4. Willing to give up all that stood in his way, all sin, especially. **II.** WHAT IS IMPLIED IN KEEPING SUCH RESOLUTION. 1. Renunciation of present sin. 2. Repentance for what is past. 3. Restitution and confession. 4. Regard to the rights of others in all respects—plain honest dealing and kindness. Oh, the endless tricks of selfishness, and the endless subterfuges with which men excuse themselves; and yet so much piety in the midst of it all. Sometimes it is that persons would not on any account stay away from church on the Sabbath, but they would cheat you in their business on the Monday if they had an opportunity of doing so. Suppose you say, well, I am seeking to get money that I may give it to the missionary cause! Let me tell you that a man might as well fit out a pirate ship for the same purpose! You take advantage, lie and cheat, to get money for God! Well, when you have got the money so for God; just go into your closet, lay the money down, and say, "Lord, Thou knowest how I got this money to-day: there was a man came into my shop and wanted a certain article, and I had not what he wanted, but I had one not so good, but I managed to get him to take it, and I charged him a little more than it was worth, because I wanted to give something to the missionary cause!" Now, would that be washing the hands in innocency? Would an infinitely holy God accept such an offering? Judge ye! **III.** We now pass to show that BOTH THE RESOLUTION AND THE KEEPING OF IT ARE INDISPENSABLE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD. When we talk of persons being justified by faith we always mean that faith implies repentance, making restitution, obedience, and holiness of heart. The faith that takes hold on Christ implies all this. We are justified by faith; but it is the faith of obedience to God, the faith which leads to sanctification, the faith which works by love and purifies the heart, the faith that overcomes the world. Ah, the faith that overcomes



the world, that's the faith to mark an honest man! No man has faith that justifies him who has not faith that makes him honest. If you are not honest you have not faith; in God's sense of the term you have not the faith of the Gospel. Now, suppose that every person in this house were at this moment willing to do as the Psalmist did, and were to come right out and say, "I will wash my hands in innocence"—what is there to hinder? (*C. G. Finney.*) *Preparation for Divine worship* :—"Innocency" does not here imply moral perfection. David was innocent of the charges advanced against him by his enemies, the aiders and abettors of Absalom's rebellion; but he was not morally pure as was the God he worshipped. He desired, therefore, that God would try his reins and his heart, so that he might know and confess his sin. Washing the hands, as emblematic of purity and innocence, was enjoined on the priests, to typify that inward holiness which alone rendered service acceptable to God; and also on the elders of the city nearest to which the body of a homicide was found. Viewed in the light of these two ceremonials, David's words may here be regarded as a protestation of innocence in reference to the more outward sense by which religion is dishonoured, and a declaration of sincerity in worship. It was then he would draw near to the altar in company with the worshippers who gathered round it. As the pious Israelite looked towards the altar, so the Christian turned his thoughts to the Redeemer whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. It was David's chief joy to visit the habitation of God's house, the place where His honour dwelt. With a like devout joy should we enter His sanctuary, and especially when we approach His holy table, and preparation for this worship should engage the Christian's prayerful attention. I. ITS NECESSITY

MAY BE ARGUED FROM SCRIPTURE. Jacob was commanded to go from Shechem to Bethel to fulfil his vow; and for this he and his household prepared by purifying themselves and putting away the strange gods from among them. When before Sinai, Moses was instructed to sanctify the people and prepare them for God's presence on the mount. There is, too, that solemn preparation for the Passover after Hezekiah had reformed the temple services, when its observance had to be delayed because some had come up to the feast without the prescribed purification of previous religious services. II. IT MAY BE ARGUED ALSO FROM THE NATURE OF THE THING. God is the infinitely high and holy One, and if before His throne the angels veil their faces, how reverently should we enter His gates and fall at His footstool! We must approach unto His presence with humility, penitence, and prayer. His presence there is assured; for He cannot lie. Love should be present in all our worship, and especially at that memorial of the atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer to whom we owe so much. (*P. Mearns.*) *The devout worshipper* :—"With all his disadvantages and drawbacks, David was the "man after God's own heart." If he sinned, and that exceedingly before the Lord, we know how thoroughly he repented. One feature in his character is very noticeable—his love for the house of God. I. DAVID'S PREPARATION FOR THE HOUSE OF THE LORD. Though an exile in the land of the Philistines, banished from the service and worship of the sanctuary, surrounded by those who would watch every action and note each shortcoming, he yet resolved to give them no opportunity of triumphing over him. A lesson for Christian worshippers. 1. Such preparation is becoming. What amazing condescension to be allowed to speak with God, and to come before Him with thanksgiving! 2. It is necessary. Worship cannot be acceptable to God unless our hands are washed in innocence. How impressive the instructions given to Aaron and his sons (Exod. xxx. 17-21); Paul directs Timothy to see that the Church lifts up holy hands in prayer (1 Tim. ii. 8). 3. It has most happy results—"the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of our salvation." II. DAVID'S ENGAGEMENTS IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD. 1. David knew it was the place where God's honour dwelt. Though only the tabernacle, it was nevertheless the place the Lord had chosen to place His name there—and there too was the glory. We have a better dispensation. 2. David was filled with gratitude at the recollection of past mercies (vers. 6, 7). Shall not we? LEARN—1. How necessary that we manifest a becoming reverence in the house of God. 2. Our services can only be reasonable and acceptable when we realise the purposes for which we assemble. 3. The dispositions of mind pleasing to God are the same under the new as under the old economy. 4. Let the text lead us to a holy self-examination. Have I washed? &c. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The sacrament of the Lord's Supper* :—I. THE DUTY OF ATTENDING IT. The command of Christ to "do this in remembrance of Me" is indisputable; His design in that command most gracious; the benefits accruing to ourselves in obeying it are great and certain. The duty of communicating, therefore, is unquestionable; the sin of neglecting so to

do is great. It is as dangerous to our spiritual condition to treat the sacrament as nothing, as to give to it a mysterious efficacy which the Scriptures do not warrant. To faith Christ is present, not bodily but spiritually, in the power of His death; and in this sense His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed, to the comfort, support, and nourishment of those who feed on Him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving. Christians in the present day suffer much in their own souls, and the work of conversion in others may be greatly hindered by the neglect of a due and worthy participation of the Lord's Supper, inasmuch as its observance is closely connected with spirituality of mind, and a prayerful desire for the spiritual welfare of our fellow-men. II. THE STATE OF MIND IN WHICH WE ARE TO DRAW NEAR TO THE LORD'S TABLE. David "desired to wash his hands in innocency," and so compass the altar of God. What did these words mean to him? Not that he would root up all corruption from his heart, and make himself entirely free from sin; for then he must needs wait until the day of his death before performing his vows. His meaning is to be found in his description of the blessed state of the true believer, in *Psa. xxxii. 1, 2*. St. Paul quotes this passage in *Rom. iv.* to prove the doctrine of our pardon and justification through Christ, by which he leaves it beyond doubt that David understood that doctrine, and described the happiness of the true believer who by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ as typified in the Jewish sacrifices had obtained such forgiveness. In this state of mind he desired to approach the altar of God; and in this state of mind the Christian too must approach his Father's table. (*R. Oakman, B.A.*) *Compassing the altar*:—The Psalmist will go round and round the altar, looking at it, looking at the blood on its base, and the blood on each of the four horns, towards north, south, east, and west, and beholding the smoke of the fire, and thinking of the sacrificial victim that has died there,—all in the way of joyful thanks for salvation provided for men! It is a survey of redemption work taken by the Redeemer; such a survey as every member of His body often takes after having felt the power of free forgiveness, and while aiming at "innocency." For the "compassing" of the altar takes place after pardon; it is made in order to view it leisurely. (*Andrew Bonar.*)

Ver 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works.—*Declaring boldly God's mercy and goodness*:—I have no notion of a timid, disingenuous profession of Christ. Some preachers and professors are like a rat playing at hide and seek behind a wainscot, who puts his head through a hole to see if the coast is clear, and ventures out if nobody is in the way; but slinks back again when danger appears. We cannot be honest to Christ except we are bold for Him. He is either worth all we can lose for Him, or He is worth nothing. (*H. G. Salter.*)

Ver. 8. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house.—*The importance of public worship*:—The form of godliness may often remain when the power is wanting; but the power cannot well subsist where the form is altogether absent. Consider the importance of public worship—I. AS IT RESPECTS GOD. If there be a Supreme Being, a Creator of the race, worship should be rendered to Him, both private and public. The natural sentiments of mankind universally attest this. And now that revelation has been given, the light of the Gospel has come, we are inexcusable if we do not obey the desire. God does not need it, but is willing to accept it. II. AS IT CONCERNS THE WORLD. Independently of its effect on the moral principles of the race, it tends to peace and order, it humanises and civilises, it strengthens the bonds of the social relation and brings out the best that is in man. III. AS IT CONCERNS OURSELVES. We are parts of a great whole, each with duties to the rest. Public worship aids in these. It gives warmth to piety and adds solemnity to moral virtue. As members of the universal Church, we adore the God and Father of us all, through the Redeemer of the race, by the sanctifying Spirit in whom we all have access. (*Hugh Blair, D.D.*) *Love for the sanctuary*:—I. THE OBJECT OF THE PSALMIST'S AFFECTION. It is "the habitation of Thy house and," &c. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and when anything is thoroughly loved it is very hard to put into one or two words all that you want to say; language seems to fail. Hence, again and again does the Psalmist tell of his affection for the house of God. II. HIS PROFESSION OF THIS AFFECTION. Some people make no profession; that they make none is their main profession. Let them take care lest, if now they profess they regard not the Lord, He at the last shall profess, "I never knew you." Others profess only before men to be praised of

them : a poor thing this. But how different was the Psalmist's oft-repeated avowal. III. SOME OF THE REASONS FOR THIS PROFESSION. They have to do with present enjoyment and hope of the future. (*J. Aldis.*) *The institutions of God's house :*

—I suppose that nothing short of an entire suspension of the privileges which we recount of our Sabbath would make us understand what the house of God is worth to us, and enable us to enter fully into the mind of the man who, driven forth an exile from Zion, uttered the longing of his heart in these burning words : "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so," &c. (Psa. xlii. 1, 2). There are those who cannot remember the time when they did not love the habitation of God's house ; others have found, perhaps late in life, what blessings are for them there. But let us note some of the reasons in which this love of the house of the Lord is founded.

I. THERE I FIRST LEARNED TO KNOW MYSELF AND THEE. There has been rest since you knew the worst of yourself, and knew that God knew it, and pitied and loved you still. II. THERE I HAVE LEARN'T MOST RICHLY THE MEANING OF THY DISCIPLINE, AND FOUND STRENGTH TO ENDURE. Some of you have gone thither crushed by burdens, pressed by temptations, beggared by losses, bewildered by difficulties ; ready to cry, I can strive no longer, I am worn out, I give up the battle at last in despair. And then blessed words have seemed to stream down on you from the height, with a soothing sweetness, with an invigorating force such as no words which you have ever heard elsewhere have conveyed.

III. FOR THERE I WAS GUIDED INTO THY MOST BLESSED SERVICE. IV. THERE I FOUND MEAT AND FRUITFUL FELLOWSHIP, and so did those I love best. We little estimate what the house of the Lord has been worth to our souls. As little do we measure its worth to our homes : what peace, unity, charity it has engendered ; what wandering, schism, and bitterness it has spared. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *The house of God :*—I. REASONS FOR LOVING THE HOUSE AND WORSHIP OF GOD.

1. Because we love Him whose house it is. 2. Because of the exercises there performed : prayer, reading, and exposition of the Word, praise. 3. Because of the company we meet there : God's children, angels, God Himself. 4. Because of blessing received there : pardon, guidance, comfort, joy. II. HOW THIS AFFECTION SHOULD BE SHOWN.

1. By regular attendance. 2. By entering heartily into the services. 3. By using our influence to bring others. 4. By contributing to maintain the house and worship of God. (*Robert Newton.*) *Public worship :*—The most vital thing, as far as the

welfare of our country is concerned, is not what we call its constitution, nor its fiscal policy, nor its elementary education, nor its intellectual or industrial achievements ; but, paradoxical as it may sound, its attendance at the sanctuary on the Lord's day.

I. OUR HIGHEST BEING IS DEPENDENT ON OUR CONCEPTION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD. If there is no power outside a man greater than himself whose law he recognises and to whom he responds, then, saving the law of the state and the convention of society, he is subject to no law, he is the free creature of his passions. But if man needs an authority outside self to control his selfish passions, he needs an ideal standard above that of common attainment if he is to reach to higher moral excellence. With a lofty ideal, a standard above ourselves, we are always being dissatisfied with ourselves and forced to make efforts to improve. Men

may rise towards their God ; they cannot rise above Him. One thing more, man needs also within himself an impulse to work, for virtue is often very hard unless you have some motive which shall lead to higher desires. If we turn from theory to history and to personal experience, is it not a fact that morality has risen or gone

down just in proportion as faith in God has been strong or feeble ? Even so calm and unprejudiced an observer as Darwin said that with the more civilised races the conviction of the existence of an all-seeing deity has had a potent influence on the advancement of morality. II. THIS FAITH IN GOD IS TO A GREAT EXTENT DEPENDENT UPON PUBLIC WORSHIP. In this busy distracting age, were there no

stated times for public worship, men would run great risk of forgetting God and becoming avowed atheists. If, then, the life of faith largely depends on Divine worship, and upon the life of faith depends the highest well-being of society, then every one who by his example encourages the neglect of public worship, whatever be his motive, is contributing to the degradation of his country, while in many cases he is securing his own. And while attending service ourselves, we should do our utmost also to induce others to be present ; to be rid of all which keeps men away from the house of God ; and to acquire everything that may properly attract them there. (*Canon Page Roberts.*) *The value of public worship :*—I. WORSHIP IS AN INSTITUTION FOR OUR INSTRUCTION. Not only is intellectual enlightenment gained, but a deep insight also into many weighty truths, a juster discernment of right and



wrong, an intimate acquaintance with the state of our own heart, the need of salvation and growth in grace. II. IT RE-CONFIRMS OUR GOOD RESOLUTIONS. They need to be again and again renewed. In the congregation we enter into the communion of saints, and are mentally incited to keep our vows. We join a brotherhood possessing the same frailties and having the same needs. The inequalities of life, so apparent in the world, vanish here, where all are drawn with the same bonds of love, and inclined to encourage and assist each other on the way of life.

III. IT RENEWS AND STRENGTHENS OUR RELIGIOUS FEELING. We often approach a service with the world still about us, with trouble and sorrow surging round. In the sanctuary, prayer and praise and the Word have calmed our minds, raised us to a higher plane, given us a truer sense of the proportion of things, juster views of God and His dealings. (*Homilist.*) *David's affection for the house of God:—*

I. DAVID HAD AN AFFECTION FOR THE SANCTUARY. 1. An ardent affection. 2. A constant affection. 3. A practical affection. II. REASONS FOR THIS AFFECTION. Because of—1. The Proprietor's residence there. 2. The company it furnishes. 3. The blessings it affords. 4. The habits it induces. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

*The sanctity of Christian art: a church-restoration sermon:—*The Greek version of this passage may be translated, "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house, the place of the tabernacling of Thy glory." It was the beauty of God's house that excited the ardour of the Psalmist. It was not beneath the dignity of inspiration to care for the decent and splendid provision for the worship of the Supreme; and in Bezaleel and Aholiab, art received her first consecration to the worship of God.

I. THE DUTY OF REVERENT CARE FOR THE EXTERNALS OF WORSHIP. 1. It may be urged that it is not right to affirm that an ordinance suited to an early age of civilisation must continue, notwithstanding the advance of human knowledge. But, at the same time, it should not be forgotten, that that part of the ceremonial law connected with the fabric of the temple had in it an element of stability. 2. It may be alleged that what was necessary to draw the minds of the Jews from the tawdry splendours of the Canaanitish worship is unnecessary in these days of Christian enlightenment. But what was attractive in the old beliefs was probably a remnant of the old tradition of reverence to God which had never wholly died out amongst the heathen. 3. It may be asserted that the spiritual nature of the Gospel is entirely alien from a system that appeals to the senses and enlists the imagination. But it can be answered, that the profoundest theological reasons may be adduced for a worship and adoration appealing to every power of humanity: as witness the early Christian services, the Epistles, the Catacombs; and when the taste and bearing of Greece combined with the practical skill of Italy to erect and adorn shrines for worship, all the arts found their legitimate sphere in the service of the Christian religion.

II. THE FINAL CAUSE WHY GOD HAS IMPLANTED IN US A SENSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL. In Him alone is perfection, beatitude, joy. All that is beautiful and lovely here below comes from Him. Even in our fallen human nature there remains sufficient virtue and grace to make us acknowledge and revere the true. We love the beautiful. And where can we find a place for it so appropriate as the courts of the Lord's house? It may confidently be asserted, that in the history of the world the highest manifestations of the beautiful have been evolved in the sublime adoration of God. (*A. P. Forbes, D.C.L.*)

*Our worship of God:—*The words are those of an old Jewish poet, spoken centuries before the rise of Christianity. They express a pious feeling which is a dominant note of the Psalter. The affection of those inspired singers for the sanctuary of the Lord seems irrepressible; out it must, whatever the theme—whether a prayer, or a lamentation, or a thanksgiving, or a sorrowful confession of sin, or a song of victory. The temple of Jerusalem was the *Keblah* towards which God's ancient people turned the face in prayer, wherever they might be. They speak of "abiding in God's tabernacle," of "dwelling in His house for ever," of "dwelling in His courts," and being "satisfied with the beauty of His house, even of His holy temple." They never weary of describing the glory of Mount Zion, and the happiness, the exultation of Divine worship.

1. Avoid narrowness in your religious views. Open your heart and mind to the whole Bible, not only to a part of it. No portion of Scripture is superfluous, but everything is necessary in its place—as a link in a chain, a stage in the growth, a step on the ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. 2. Never imagine that while beauty and stateliness are desirable in secular buildings, they are superfluous in the house of God. Never dream that spirituality of worship is furthered by poverty of accessories, by absence or meagreness of ornament, by an utter lack of comeliness in the consecrated place. All outward and visible beauty

is a symbol and prophecy of the Unseen and Eternal Beauty, and therefore naturally fitted to lift our hearts to that great Object of all worship. The Church may rightly be made glorious with lavish expense of art, and time, and means : if only because the masses of God's poor stand in pressing need of some such contrast with their ordinary haunts, to waken in their souls the sense of something higher, purer, nobler than the sights and sounds to which hard necessity has restricted them.

3. Every church is "holy ground," for it is a meeting-place of God and man ; and what is holy should be beautiful. Beauty is the natural stimulus of love. The truth that God meets us here in a special way does not contradict the truth of His Presence everywhere. The prophets and teachers of Israel knew quite well that the Spiritual is the only Real, and that spiritual worship means a worship which is heartfelt, not hollow, reasonable not magical and meaningless,—a worship in which the entire consciousness, the whole nature, concentrates itself upon God. *Sursum corda*—Lift up your hearts ! and your churches may be perfect shrines of beauty, and your services musical as the song of angels ; your worship will not therefore be less but more spiritual. (*C. J. Ball, M.A.*)

*Love to the house of God :—*I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE. 1. This habitation, or house, is designed by the Great Proprietor of it for public worship. 2. It implies the manifestation of the Divine Presence. II. THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE TO THE HOUSE OF GOD. 1. The love of affection. 2. The love of preference. 3. Because of advantages realised by attending it. (1) Children of God are born there. (2) There the believer was convinced of sin. (3) There the presence of God is manifested. (4) It is the banqueting house. (5) It is the place of instruction. (6) Its exercises sweeten for glory. 4. Because they worship with good men. 5. It is a practical love. (1) Regular attendance. (2) Engagement in its services, according to ability. (3) Invitation to others to attend. (4) Pecuniary support. (5) Prayer. III. APPLICATION. 1. How great the importance and advantages of Divine worship. Christ and His apostles honoured it (Luke iv. 16 ; Acts ii. 46). 2. How great the guilt and danger of neglecting the house of God (Psa. lxxiii. 27 ; Zech. xiv. 17, 19 ; Heb. x. 25). 3. If the earthly temple is so loved, what love will the heavenly temple create ! (*Helps for the Pulpit.*)

Ver. 9. *Gather not my soul with sinners.*—*The great care and concern now that our souls be not gathered with sinners in the other world, considered and improved :—*It is taken for granted that at death souls are gathered together after their own sort, and that horror is felt at being gathered with sinners. In discoursing on this doctrine we shall note—*I. SOME THINGS IMPLIED IN IT.* 1. Here souls are mingled together. The result of this is that it keeps both parties uneasy ; they are a mutual check one upon another, and providence varies in its dispensations accordingly. 2. In the other world there will be separation ; and that—3. The time for this is at death. But—4. The saints have a horror of being gathered with sinners, and so, too, have the wicked. Balaam (Numb. xxi. 10). II. WHO ARE SINNERS. All unjustified and unsanctified persons ; such as they who neither know nor care about religion : the profane, the mere moralists (Matt. v. 20), and formalists (2 Tim. iii. 5). For all these miss the mark men should aim at, and all are guilty of death before the Lord (1 Kings i. 21 ; Rom. iii. 19), and they can do nothing but sin (Psa. xiv. 3), since the principles that govern them are wrong (Tit. i. 15). III. THE MEANING OF THE SOUL BEING GATHERED WITH SINNERS IN THE OTHER WORLD. The soul is separated from the body at death and goes to its appointed place, which is separate from that of saints. IV. THE CONCERN FELT IN REFERENCE TO THIS. It implies an earnest belief in the foregoing truths, and a dread of what they declare, together with an acknowledgment that God might justly condemn them ; wherefore they betake themselves to His mercy (Job. ix. 15). V. THE REASONABLENESS OF SUCH CONCERN. 1. Because to be gathered with sinners is to be separated from God. 2. In a most doleful place (Isa. xxiv. 22). 3. With the most frightful society (Matt. xxv. 41). 4. Suffering the heaviest punishment (2 Thess. i. 9). 5. To be left in their sin there ; which will itself be their punishment. Their passions will rage, but they cannot be satisfied. 6. And this for ever. VI. LESSONS FROM THIS DOCTRINE. 1. However favourable the condition of the sinner in this world, it is a miserable one after all. 2. That the great business of our life is to learn to die, and to prepare for the next world. 3. We are in great danger of perishing, and therefore should be all the more earnest. 4. Therefore let the careless, slothful, delaying, malignant sinners take heed. But—5. Such as are showing this concern may be comforted, for they are in the way of duty, and are taking

their work in time; it is the Spirit who works in them this concern, and they have to do with a good and gracious God (Ezek. xxiii. 11). Then—6. Your concern is quite different from that of the ungodly, who also shrink from hell, as Balaam did. For your concern is, not to be separated from Christ, and not to be left in sin; and you are now forsaking sin with true purpose of heart. Wherefore—7. Be thus concerned all of you, come to Christ, forsake all sin, unite with the godly, observe ordinances, avoid the way of sinners now. For how important this matter is; nothing is to be put before it, and now is the accepted and the only time, and the gathering in the other world will be eternal and unutterable. Wherefore, upon the whole, let me obtain of you—(1) That you will take some serious thoughts of the other world in both parts of it. (2) That you will inquire what case you are in for it. And—(3) That you will lay down measures timely, that your souls be not gathered with sinners there. May the Lord persuade and incline your hearts unto this course. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *The saint's horror at the sinner's hell:*—We must all be gathered in due course. It may come to-morrow; it may be deferred another handful of years. Filled with a holy horror of the hell of sinners, let us make most sure our calling to the heaven of the blessed. Consider—I. **THE GATHERING.** There have been many such—Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; Jericho and the Canaanites; the destruction of Jerusalem. But forgetting all these inferior gatherings, let us look on to the last great one, which is proceeding every day to its completion. As the huntsman, when he goes forth to the battue, encompasses the beasts of the forest with an ever-narrowing ring of hunters, that he may exterminate them all in one great slaughter, so the God of Justice has made a ring in His providence about the sinful sons of men. None can escape. I will not attempt to describe what our Saviour veiled in words like these: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." II. **THE PRAYER ITSELF.** We are all agreed about it, every one of us. Sinners do not wish to be gathered with sinners. But the reasons of the one prayer are different in different persons. A selfish desire to escape misery is sufficient to account for it with sinful men. There is a class of sinners that some would like to be gathered with now. Can we say, when we look upon the bright side of the wicked, "Gather not," &c. ? If we cannot we really cannot pray the prayer at all. But the Christian prays this prayer because, as far as his acquaintance with sinners goes, he does not even now wish for their company. We cannot be with them and feel ourselves perfectly at home. And even now, when God comes to punish a nation, the Christian has to suffer with the rest. He may well, from the little taste he has had of their company, pray, "Gather not," &c. I do not know any class of sinners whose company the Christian would desire. I should not like to live with the most precise of hypocrites, nor with the formalist; and as for the blasphemer, we would as soon be shut up in a tiger's den. And there are other reasons. When sinners are gathered at the last their characters will be the same. And think of the place, the pit of hell. Their occupations, cursing God; their sufferings, the pain of body and soul they know. And they are for ever banished from God and Christ. III. But there is in our text a **FEAR**, as if a whisper said, "Perhaps, after all, you may be gathered with the wicked." This fear may arise from remembrance of past sin. Before we were converted we lived as others. Present backwardness, unfruitfulness, and our conscious weakness, these all rouse this fear. Therefore note—IV. **THE ANSWER TO THIS PRAYER.** Have you the two things that David had, the outward integrity and the inward trust? If so, then you cannot be gathered with sinners. For the rule is, like to like. And our comrades here are to be our companions hereafter. And we have been too dearly bought with Christ's blood, and are too much loved by God; and the new nature given you will not allow of it. Careless and thoughtless one, I entreat you to consider if it be not a dreadful thing to be a sinner. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The awful association:*—Many disputes there are concerning the origin of human souls. The Bible assigns the first origination to God, and closely connects all with the first man. "All souls are Mine; as the soul of the master, so the soul of the servant." He is the great Lord of human souls. I. **THE WORTH OF THE HUMAN SOUL.** Evinc'd—1. By its intellectual capacities: thought, reason, memory, conscience, affection. 2. By its moral capacities. It is naturally endowed with an ability to know, serve, love, and enjoy God. 3. By its immortality. It perishes not with the body. "The spirit of man goeth upward,"—to God. 4. By the efforts of fallen spirits to effect its destruction. 5. By the means which God has used for its salvation. II. **THE SOULS OF ALL WILL BE GATHERED TOGETHER, CLASSED AND FIXED FOR EVER, IN A STATE SUITABLE TO THEIR CHARACTER.** 1. What is more reasonable than such an associa-



tion of similar minds after their probation? 2. Its probability is to be inferred from the nature of God and the present state of trial. 3. Its certainty is proved by Divine testimony. "He will render to every man according to his works."

III. THE SOULS OF SINNERS ARE GATHERED AT DEATH INTO A STATE OF SHAME AND SUFFERING. 1. This is a matter of positive Divine assertion. 2. Realise the fact. An entire company of lost souls!—shut up with such for ever. Think of a prison full of felons and blasphemers! 3. Consider the threatenings connected with the fact. The wrath of God. Sin will for ever live in them and incur wrath. Spiritual death will triumph over their soul, and never cease. IV. THE PRAYER OF THE TEXT. "Gather not my soul," &c. 1. How can this be answered, seeing we are sinners? The language of the prayer proceeds from a consciousness of deserving to be gathered with sinners. 2. Yet the prayer supposes the possibility of being heard and answered. The scheme of salvation shows how it can be. 3. The sincerity of the prayer will be proved by returning to God practically and in heart. If we would not be gathered with sinners at last we must break off from them now. (*Evangelist.*)

*The eternal separation:—*I. THE GOOD MAN IS CHIEFLY CONCERNED ABOUT HIS SOUL. Many anxious as to health, earthly comforts, security of goods, and so on. The care of the godly is his soul. 1. The soul is the man. 2. The salvation of the soul is necessary for the glory of God and the true ends of our being. The soul is in desperate peril; and none but Christ can save. II. THE GOOD MAN KNOWS THAT THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL IS SETTLED AT DEATH. Death comes to all. And "after death the judgment": inferred by reason, foreboded by conscience, revealed by Scripture. II. THE GOOD MAN RECOILS IN HORROR FROM BEING ASSOCIATED IN DESTINY WITH THE WICKED. Why? Because he abhors (1) their character; (2) their society; (3) their doom. Do we shrink from the society of the false, the impure, the revengeful, the slaves of lust and selfishness, how much more should we recoil from eternal fellowship with these and such as these! (*W. Forsyth, M.A.*)

*The gathering-time of souls:—*As there is a gathering-time for the fruits of the earth, so there is a gathering-time for men. Death is the reaper. With his scythe he mows down the generations, and justice gathers whom he mows,—some to misery, some to bliss. Who would be gathered with the sinners in the great world of retribution? (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *A desire to be separate from all sinners:—*Even those of you who are not renewed by Christ despise vice when she walks abroad naked. I fear me ye cannot say as much when she puts on her silver slippers, and wraps about her shoulders her scarlet mantle. Sin in rags is not popular. Vice in sores and squalor tempts no one. In the grosser shapes, men hate the very fiend whom they love when it is refined and delicate in its form. I want to know whether you can say, "Gather not my soul with sinners" when you see the ungodly in their high days and holidays? Do you not envy the fraudulent merchant counting his gold, his purse heavy with his gains, while he himself by his craft is beyond all challenge by the law? Do you not envy the giddy revellers, spending the night in the merry dance, laughing, making merry with wine, and smiling with thoughts of lust? Yonder voluptuary, entering the abode where virtue never finds a place, and indulging in pleasures unworthy to be named in this hallowed house, does he never excite your envy? I ask you, when you see the pleasures, the bright side, the honours, the emoluments, the gains, the merriments of sin, do ye then say, "Gather not my soul with sinners"? There is a class of sinners that some would wish to be gathered with, those easy souls who go on so swimmingly. They never have any trouble; conscience never pricks them; business never goes wrong with them; they have no bands in their life, no bonds in their death; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. They are like the green bay tree, which spreads on every side, until its boughs cover whole acres with their shade. These are the men who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Can we say, when we look at these, when we gaze upon the bright side of the wicked, "Gather not my soul with sinners"? Remember, if we cannot do so without reservation we really cannot pray the prayer at all; we ought to alter it, and put it, "Gather not my soul with openly reprobate sinners"; and then, mark you, as there is only one place for all sorts of sinners, moral or immoral, apparently holy or profane, your prayer cannot be heard, for if you are gathered with sinners at all—with the best of sinners—you must be gathered with the worst of sinners too. I know, children of God, ye can offer the prayer as it stands, and say, "In all their glory and their pomp, in all their wealth, their peace, and their comfort, my soul abhors them, and I earnestly beseech thee, O Lord, by the blood of Jesus, 'Gather not my soul with

sinners.' (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The company and destiny of sinners undesirable:—*As for blasphemers, we could not endure them a moment. Would you not as soon be shut up in a tiger's den as with a cursing, swearing, thievish profligate? Who can endure the company of either a Voltaire or a Manning? Find out the miserly, the mean, the sneaking, the grasping—who likes to be with them? The angry, the petulant, who never try to check the unholy passion, one is always glad to be away from such folks; you are afraid lest you should be held responsible for their mad actions, and therefore, if you must be with them, you are always ill at ease. With no sort of sinners can the child of God be hail-fellow. Lambs and wolves, doves and hawks, devils and angels are not fit companions; and so through what little trial the righteous have had, they have learned that there is no sort of sinners that they would like to be shut up with for ever. (*Ibid.*) *The final separation of mankind:—*In Jersey City, over from New York, there is one of the largest distributing centres of passenger traffic in the world. All the passengers for the various ramifying routes are gathered together in the waiting hall, with the doors closed. Suddenly these doors are flung open, and in a high, shrill key the railway attendant calls out the route of the train that is about to start, and goes over the names of the big towns on that route, in a roll long enough to make him need breath when he has finished it. "Philadelphia," &c., &c., and you see passengers start from their seats among the throng and hurry to the exit the railway man indicates. They are bound for Philadelphia, and the rest. The doors close, and the throng inside the hall settle down again. After some time the doors are flung open again, and the same sing-song of the route and the list of stops. "Chicago and St. Louis," and you see another company of passengers make their way out to the waiting train. They are those going to Chicago and St. Louis. Again the doors close, and again they are flung to the wall, and this time the list of names the fellow calls out ends with "Montreal," and, when I heard that, I started up and made for the door; I was going to Montreal. In a few hours they that were one company inside the waiting-hall of the station of Jersey City are separated by hundreds of miles, and never all to meet again. That is like this world. We are gathered together in one waiting-hall in the station of time, and those sky-doors have yet to be flung open, and the voice of God, the last trump, is to burst on every mortal ear, and companies and groups have to separate and gather according to their destination for eternity. Here passengers for heaven: there passengers for hell. You cannot tell in the waiting-hall what passengers are bound the glad one way or what passengers are bound the sad other way. The outward appearance is all we can see. He that looketh upon and knoweth the heart is the Lord. Some presumptuous folk would try to erect a dividing barricade in the waiting-hall, and divide it into two sections, whose partitions would be covered in regulation form with ecclesiastical jagged broken glass, mostly coloured, I know. But it will not do: it will not do. Leave the division to the Divider Himself. Judge not, but wait till the shout of the archangel of the coming King is heard through the suddenly flung open doors—in a moment, in that moment, in that twinkling of an eye, at that last trump. There are only two groups, and two departures, and two destinations from this waiting-hall of time. How fitting the prayer, "Gather not my soul with sinners." (*John Robertson.*)

Ver. 10. *Their right hand is full of bribes.—Virtue hated by the wicked:—*Saul not only sought David's life with his own hand, but bribed others to seek it, and betray him into his power (1 Sam. xxii. 6-19). In this way the Jews treated the Son of David. Failing to accomplish His death themselves, they at last bribed one of His own disciples to betray Him into their hands. It is strange that goodness should have always met with such treatment at the hands of the world. Many have thought, in their ignorance of the human heart, that virtue only needs to be presented in her own beautiful colours to be at once loved by all. So an eminent Scotch divine thought when, after depicting in terms of glowing eloquence the moral beauty and amiability of virtue, he exclaimed, "O virtue, if thou wert embodied, all men would love thee!" His colleague later, addressing the same congregation, said, "My reverend friend observed that if virtue were embodied all men would love her. Virtue has been embodied. But how was she treated? Did all men love her? No; she was despised and rejected of men, who, after defaming, insulting, and scourging her, led her to Calvary, where they crucified her between two thieves." (*D. Caldwell, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. *My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless*

the Lord.—*An even place*:—I. THE EVEN PLACE ON WHICH THE BELIEVER'S FOOT WILL STAND. II. THE BENEFITS IN POSSESSION, IN EXPERIENCE, AND IN PROSPECT WHICH HE WILL DERIVE FROM THIS STANDING. III. THE OCCASION, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH IT WILL BECOME HIM TO EXPRESS HIS GRATITUDE. (*Thomas Dale.*) *Worship in the beauty of holiness*:—By the foot, the instrument of motion, we understand the whole turn and conduct of life. Thus the ways of a man denote his doings and his dealings, the affections which govern him, and the actions proceeding from them. When these are right, or even, we may appeal to God as Judge, worship Him in the beauty of holiness, bless Him in the congregations. I. HOLINESS OF LIFE IS A PROPER QUALIFICATION FOR ALL WHO WOULD WORSHIP GOD WITH ACCEPTANCE. Holiness likens us to God. He desires the holy to worship Him, respects their service, and bestows His blessing. II. HOLINESS OF LIFE IS AN ESSENTIAL AS WELL AS A PROPER QUALIFICATION FOR ALL RESORTS TO GOD IN RELIGIOUS OFFICES. Worship is not enjoined on us for the sake of God, but for our own benefit. Its main intent is to lodge with us a sense of our depending upon Him for all we have and all we hope for, to the end that it may secure our obedience to His commands and provide effectually for our final happiness. We cannot, therefore, approach Him in worship without a heart and life corresponding. (*N. Marshall, D.D.*) *Blessing God in the congregation*:—If a saint's single voice in prayer is so sweet to God's ear, much more His saints' prayer and praise in consort together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the Church are the emblem of heaven itself. There is a wonderful prevalence in the joint prayers of His people. When Peter was in prison the Church meets and prays him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of a whole city, which, may be, he would not grant at the request of a private subject. (*H. Gurnall.*)













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